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OUTFLANKED

Study: US could potentially lose war against China or Russia

By PAUL SONNE
AND SHANE HARRIS
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The United States has lost its military edge to a dangerous degree and could potentially lose a war against China or Russia, according to a report released Wednesday by a bipartisan commission that Congress created to evaluate President Donald Trump's defense strategy.

The National Defense Strategy Commission, comprising former top Republican and Democratic officials selected by Congress, evaluated the Trump administration's 2018 National Defense Strategy, which ordered a vast reshaping of the U.S. military to compete with Beijing and Moscow in an era of renewed great-power competition.

While endorsing the strategy's aims, the commission warned that Washington isn't moving

fast enough or investing sufficiently to put the vision into practice, risking a further erosion of American military dominance that could become a national security emergency.

At the same time, according to the commission, China and Russia are seeking dominance in their regions and the ability to project military power globally as their authoritarian governments pursue defense buildups aimed squarely at the U.S.

SEE OUTFLANKED ON PAGE 8

Chinese army troops march in formation as they prepare for a military parade in 2017.

FEI MAOHUA, XINHUA NEWS AGENCY/AP

New policy gives some nondeployable soldiers only 6 months to overcome issues

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army no longer must wait until soldiers have been in a non-deployable status for one year to dismiss them from the service under new guidelines developed from the Pentagon's so-called 'deploy or get out' policy.

The service on Tuesday rolled out its long-awaited new policy governing soldiers serving

in a nondeployable status, announcing troops who cannot deploy for any administrative reason must fix it within six months or they will be forced from the service as outlined in a Nov. 8 memorandum from Army Secretary Mark Esper.

"We must have a deployable and fit culture in the Army," Esper wrote in the memo. "Our nation deserves no less."

The new policy follows Defense Secretary Jim Mattis' order in February that all the mili-

tary services develop guidelines to address growing rates of nondeployable servicemembers. Mattis' order sought to remove troops who remained nondeployable for a variety of reasons — including medical conditions, fitness problems or administrative failures — for more than a year. Last month, Pentagon officials said Mattis' policy was working, announcing the military had seen a reduction of about 100,000 nondeployable troops since February.

SEE POLICY ON PAGE 9

'We must have a deployable and fit culture in the Army. Our nation deserves no less.'

Mark Esper
Army secretary

EUROPE

Talks move on US base in Poland

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

Discussions about setting up a major American military base in Poland moved forward Tuesday as top defense officials met at the Pentagon to dissect Warsaw's offer to host a U.S. armored division.

"We are working out the details on what the offer is, what can best contribute to alliance unity, to alliance security and to the continued strengthening of the bilateral relationship," Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said before talks with his Polish counterpart Mariusz Blaszczak.

Poland has offered up to \$2 billion to help fund a facility where troops and their families could be stationed on a permanent basis. President Donald Trump has expressed interest in the idea, calling the offer "a very major contribution." Polish President Andrzej Duda has suggested naming the site "Fort Trump."

The U.S. is investigating options, but so far Mattis hasn't publicly expressed support or opposition.

More talks are expected in the months ahead. After meeting with Mattis, Blaszczak said Warsaw's "proposal for permanent U.S. Army presence in Poland was well received."

"This has been only a second meeting of the working group. Many more meetings are required," Blaszczak told Polish media.

For Warsaw, the hope is that the U.S. will set up a base with ground troops, schools, medical facilities and all the infrastructure that is commonplace at major bases around the world. Polish officials see a permanent



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, left, welcomes Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak, center, at the Pentagon on Tuesday. The two officials discussed Poland's offer to host a U.S. armored division.

U.S. force as a more potent deterrent to Russian aggression than an arrangement in which NATO troops are constantly rotating in and out of the country.

Since 2014, the U.S. and NATO have boosted their military presence in Poland. The U.S. has a command headquarters in Poznan, a rotational tank brigade positioned at various military outposts and 1,000 additional troops deployed near Poland's border with the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad.

The Poles are eager to have more U.S. troops in the country's east while Washington favors locations in central Poland. Blaszczak on Tuesday said an official Pentagon assessment on the issue was expected by March.

There is disagreement among security analysts about the military merits of basing U.S. forces in Poland. Proponents argue it puts American troops closer to potential flashpoints and could possibly prevent Moscow from testing NATO resolve. An

Army War College study in 2017 also found that permanently basing troops in Europe is more affordable than constantly rotating them.

Others argue if there was ever a conflict with Russia, troops on base near Russia's border would be easy targets for Moscow's long-range weaponry. Building an Army garrison in Poland also risks a wider escalation with Russia. Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko warned last week that he would allow Moscow to build up its forces there if neighboring Poland moves forward with a U.S. base.

Still, U.S. military leaders see Poland as the new "center of gravity" in Europe, and Warsaw's offer is getting a serious look.

"We're going to be discussing that today at length, the details," Mattis said. "It's obviously something we'll discuss with all of the allies as well."

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2 Truman sailors are arrested in Portugal

By SCOTT WYLAND
Stars and Stripes

Two sailors were arrested Monday on suspicion of assaulting a taxi driver and stealing his cellphone while they were on shore leave from the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman in Lisbon, Portugal.

The sailors were released to U.S. authorities and are back aboard the carrier, Navy officials said Wednesday. They said that the Portuguese justice system will handle the case.

"The personal behavior of the two sailors is not in keeping with the standards and expectations of the U.S. Navy or Harry S. Truman," spokeswoman Lt. Cmdr. Laura Stegheer said in a statement Wednesday. "We offer our sincerest regrets and apologies to the gentleman involved in the incident and to our gracious hosts in the city of Lisbon."

A taxi driver told Portuguese police that two American sailors assaulted him and took his phone about 2 a.m. Monday after he picked them up in Lisbon, the Portuguese news outlet Cofina Media reported.

The driver was treated at a hospital for injuries, Cofina reported. The sailors later appeared in Lisbon criminal court with a lawyer and representatives from the U.S. Embassy and Portuguese navy.

Portuguese authorities were not immediately available for comment, and it was not clear Wednesday whether charges had been filed.

The incident occurred while the aircraft carrier was making a port stop in Lisbon after participating in the NATO exercise Trident Juncture in the North Atlantic.

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MILITARY

Ex-Navy captain pleads guilty in corruption case

By CATLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A former Navy captain and public affairs director pleaded guilty Tuesday to criminal conflict of interest after accepting \$65,000 from defense contractor Leonard Glenn "Fat Leonard" Francis in exchange for advice on a Navy corruption investigation that ultimately snared Francis and several service officials.

Jeffrey Breslau, 52, of Cumming, Ga., admitted to viewing, reviewing or editing 33 documents, sending at least 135 emails of advice to Francis, offering 14 "talking points" to prepare Francis before his meetings with "high-ranking U.S. Navy personnel" and ghostwriting numerous emails as Francis to the Navy, according to a Justice Department statement Tuesday.

Also on Tuesday, retired Master Chief Petty Officer Ricardo Iznat David, 62, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 17

months in prison on fraud charges related to the Fat Leonard scandal.

Francis, a Malaysian national, pleaded guilty in U.S. court in 2015 to bribery and fraud charges after admitting to running a "massive, decade-long conspiracy involving 'scores' of U.S. Navy officials, tens of millions of dollars in fraud and millions of dollars in bribes," according to the Justice Department.

Breslau is the latest of 22 defendants to plead guilty in connection with the scandal. In total, 33 people have been charged. Many of the defendants admitted to accepting payment or gifts — including "luxury travel," "top-shelf alcohol," Cuban cigars and the services of prostitutes, according to the Justice Department statement.

Breslau's case stands out as it appears he used the same skills he needed as public affairs director for the U.S. Pacific Fleet to help Francis in the corruption scandal.

"As part of his [Navy] duties, Breslau was involved in devising the U.S. Navy's

public affairs communications strategy and provided public affairs guidance to Pacific Fleet components and other U.S. Navy commands," the Justice Department said in the statement.

Breslau admitted to advising Francis on public relations from March 2012 through July 2013 while Breslau was serving as U.S. Pacific Fleet public affairs director and later from August 2013 to September 2013 when he was assigned to the commanding officer for Joint Public Affairs Support Element in Norfolk, Va.

In court documents, prosecutors said Breslau's criminal actions "substantially disrupted" the Navy's dealings with Francis. Breslau did not disclose his \$65,000 "consulting agreement" with Francis to the Navy, according to the Justice Department.

Breslau was originally charged in September but has been free on bond, according to court records. He will be sentenced at a later date.

David, of Concepcion, Tarlac, Philippines, was also sentenced to a year of probation and ordered to pay restitution of \$30,000, in addition to his prison sentence, after pleading guilty to wire fraud.

David worked in logistics with the Navy's 7th Fleet in various assignments from 2001 to 2010. He admitted to letting Francis and his Singapore-based ship husbanding company, Glenn Defense Marine Asia, "inflate the husbanding invoices to bill for services never rendered," according to the statement.

"For example, David instructed Francis to inflate invoices for the USS Essex's anticipated November 2007 port visit to the Philippines," the Justice Department said in its statement.

In return, David received five-star hotel rooms at numerous port visits from Francis.

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China's Hong-20 could alter US Pacific operations

By WYATT OLSON
Stars and Stripes

For almost two decades, China has been designing and building its answer to America's B-2 long-range stealth bomber, and Chinese state media have recently hinted that the Hong-20 will soon undergo trial flights.

Although little is known about its specifications, some Western defense analysts suggest the introduction of this new generation of stealth bomber could usher in a sea change for U.S. military operations in the Pacific region.

"It isn't just indicative of their larger strategy and their desire to continue to develop capabilities that could significantly impact how we conduct operations if need be in the Pacific region and eventually in other regions as well," said Mark Gunzinger, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, a Washington-based think tank.

Douglas Barrie, a senior fellow for military aerospace at the London-based think tank International Institute for Strategic Studies, said people are paying a lot of attention to this because the Hong-20 is part of a far broader modernization and capability-enhancement program being seen across the board in China.

In terms of air-power projection, it just makes your defensive picture that much more demanding," he said.

Malcolm Davis, a defense analyst with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute in Canberra, said a fully realized long-range stealth bomber would give China the same "aerospace" structure possessed by the United States. A triad consists of land-launched nuclear missiles, nuclear-armed submarines and nuclear-capable strategic aircraft.

A stealthy, long-range bomber would significantly increase China's ability to deny intervention by U.S. forces as far out as Guam and Japan, Davis said.

A documentary broadcast in January by the state-run China Central Television said "the development of new long-distance strategic bomber, Hong-20, has made great progress." It was the first time the name of the bomber officially appeared in state media.

Some aviation observers had speculated that China would unveil the Hong-20 at this month's International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition in China's southern city of Zhuhai, but the bomber was a no-show.

Some China state media reports have suggested that the bomber will make its first appearance next year during a parade celebrating the 70th anniversary of the People's Liberation Army Air Force.

The Hong-20 is meant to replace the 1950s-era H-6 bomber, a Soviet Union-designed aircraft that has received numerous updates in the decades since then



GERALD WILLIS/Courtesy of the U.S. Air Force

An Air Force B-2 stealth bomber takes off from Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, in January. China is developing its own stealth bomber.

and is now called the H-6K, Barrie said.

"It's pretty long in the tooth," he said. "The H-6K is many things, but it's not stealthy by any stretch of the imagination. You can see it coming from a long way off."

Information about the Hong-20 is mostly guesswork at this point, he said.

The Pentagon's 2018 annual assessment of China's military developments provided scant detail about the Hong-20, saying only that it would likely debut in the next decade, possess a flying-wing design, have a range of roughly 5,000 miles, carry a payload of at least 10 metric tons and employ both conventional and nuclear weapons.

It would basically be a clone of the U.S. B-2 bomber, which the Air Force intends to begin phasing out in the 2020s with the next-generation B-21 Raider.

"If someone had said 15, 20 years ago that the Chinese were going to be able to develop this, I'd have been very skeptical of it," Barrie said. "But given the progress the Chinese have made in the defense aerospace sector over the past two decades, I think it's now a credible claim. If somebody said the Chinese were going to roll out this kind of design in the next couple years and have it in service sometime before 2030, that would all be perfectly plausible in the Hong-20."

Barrie said China observers at the International Institute for Strategic Studies agree that the Chinese air force does not now have a nuclear role — a function that could be provided by a long-range bomber like the Hong-20.

"That's partly colored by some of the statements we've seen recently where senior Chinese air force officials talk about their desire to have a strategic (nuclear) capability," he said.

Twenty years ago, China's air force was stymied around homeland air defense, Barrie said.

"It's now much more about power projection out to the island chains, the ability to operate jointly, the ability to operate in contested environments," he said.

"Within there is the ambition to revisit the nuclear role."

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1 pilot dead, 1 hurt in Texas T-38C crash

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — One pilot was killed and another was hospitalized when their T-38C Talon crashed late Tuesday at Laughlin Air Force Base in Texas, service officials said about the fifth crash of the training jet in the last 12 months.

The aircraft, which is used for training student pilots to fly fighter or bomber jets, crashed about 7:40 p.m. local time on the south Texas base just outside Del Rio, according to a statement posted on Laughlin's Facebook page.

The names of the pilots involved in the crash were not released, pending next of kin notification.

An Air Force spokesman at Laughlin declined Wednesday to provide a condition of the hospitalized pilot, who was taken to Val Verde Regional Medical Center in Del Rio after the jet went down. The spokesman said he did not know whether the base would suspend flight operations at Laughlin following the deadly crash. Officials had begun an investigation into the incident Wednesday, he said.

The crash came just weeks after the Air Force removed three of the top commanders at Laughlin, citing concerns about dangerous and threatening behavior at the major pilot training installation, the service's Air Education and Training Command announced Oct. 31.

The commander of the 47th Flying Training Wing, Col. Charles Velino, was fired by Lt. Gen. Steven Kwast, the AETC chief.

The commanders of the wing's operations group and a flight training squadron were also removed by Kwast, who cited "chronic leadership failures" found in an investigation into widespread officer misconduct within the unit.

That investigation found instances of heavy drinking and improper treatment of some student pilots that created a toxic command climate.

A new commander, Col. Lee Gentile, has since taken the reins of the 47th Flying Training Wing.

The crash is the second fatal crash of a T-38 at Laughlin in 12 months, coming almost one year after Air Force Capt. Paul J. Barbour was killed and Capt. Joshua Hammervold was injured when the jet experienced total hydraulic failure, according to an investigation into the crash.

The other T-38 crashes in the last 12 months occurred in 2018 at other locations and the pilots survived.

On Sept. 11, a T-38C aircraft crashed shortly after takeoff from Sheppard Air Force Base near Wichita Falls, Texas.

On Aug. 17, a T-38 crashed near Vance Air Force Base in Oklahoma. The pilot ejected before the crash.

On May 23, two pilots ejected safely from a T-38 before it crashed in the vicinity of Columbus Air Force Base in Mississippi.

The Northrup Grumman-built T-38 were the world's first supersonic training jet, first produced in 1961.

The twin-seat jets have been used to train more than 72,000 military pilots to fly combat jet aircraft. They are due to be replaced in the coming decades.

Boeing was awarded a \$9.2 billion contract in September to build T-X aircraft to replace the Air Force's T-38C Talons. The contract calls for 350 of the new trainer jets to be ready for full operational deployment by 2034.

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Navy works with Brunei in CARAT

By CHRISTIAN LOPEZ
Stars and Stripes

Navy ships arrived at Brunei's Muara Naval Base this week for the next leg of Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training, which will include operations in the hotly contested South China Sea.

The 24th annual CARAT — a series of bilateral exercises aimed at strengthening professional skills and relationships across South and Southeast Asia — started in June in Thailand. The Navy recently completed shore and sea drills with Bangladesh in the Bay of Bengal. Past stops included Indonesia and Malaysia.

"As one of the original CARAT partners, the Royal Brunei Armed Forces have been part of CARAT since the exercise series began in 1995, and we remain committed to further strengthening this vital partnership through more frequent and sophisticated engagements," Capt. Ann McCann, deputy commander of Destroyer Squadron 7, said in a Navy statement.

The fast transport ship USNS Fall River and a P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft are joining the Royal Brunei Navy in the South China Sea. There, the navies will conduct an anti-air warfare exercise to further increase missile defense proficiency and divi-



GREG JOHNSON/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

Capt. Charles Black, right, speaks to local media aboard the USNS Fall River during Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training at Muara Naval Base in Brunei on Tuesday.

sion tactics drills to enhance communications between ships sailing closely together while making complex maneuvers.

Other drills will aim to improve the navies' ability to track and pursue targets.

Last week, Chinese officials told their U.S. counterparts to stop sending ships and military aircraft close to islands claimed by Beijing in the South China Sea. The U.S. pushed back, insisting it will continue to "fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows."

Last month, the Chinese destroyer Luyang "conducted a series of increasingly aggressive maneuvers" as the USS Decatur sailed through the sea's Spratly Islands, according to Lt. Cmdr. Tim Gordon, a spokesman for U.S. Pacific Fleet.

The Luyang came within "45 yards of De-

catur's bow, after which Decatur maneuvered to prevent a collision," Gordon said. At the time, Gordon called the Luyang's maneuvers unsafe and unprofessional.

"Our combined ability to effectively operate out at sea in any maritime environment demonstrates our rapidly growing partnership and unwavering commitment to ensuring freedom of navigation and respect for international law," Rear Adm. Joey Tynch, Task Force 73 commander, said in the Navy statement.

In August, the U.S. and Brunei conducted their first-ever army exercise to further expand military relations between both partner nations, the statement added.

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US Marine suspected in wife's death after ball

New York Daily News

A U.S. Marine killed his wife following a military ball in Virginia earlier this month, authorities allege.

Police in Arlington found Natasha Rivera, 20, dead inside a hotel room on the morning of Nov. 3. Her husband, Rodolfo Valencia, who was at the scene, was taken into custody without incident.

Natasha Rivera was also a Marine, and the recently married couple were stationed at Quantico. They had an infant child.

Rodolfo Valencia, 24, had told a dispatcher just after 10 a.m. that his wife was unconscious and that he believed he had killed her, according to a search warrant obtained by the Free Lance-Star of Fredericksburg, Va.

Natasha Rivera had injuries consistent with strangulation and a "brutal" beating, a detective wrote, according to the newspaper. Her husband indicated he blacked out after drinking the night before and did not remember what happened, according to investigators.

The couple had attended a ball celebrating the Marine Corps' 243rd birthday.

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THE NEW SANNO

PACIFIC

2nd veteran arrested in Taiwan homicide

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

A second U.S. military veteran has become ensnared in the grisly drug-related homicide of a Canadian school teacher on Taiwan over the summer.

Jason Hobbie, 46, was arrested Oct. 18 and is now the fourth suspect being held in the death of Ramgahan Sanjay Ryan, a 43-year-old Canadian man killed and dismembered with machetes on the evening of Aug. 21, according to the English-language Taiwan News.

Hobbie was allegedly fingered by Ewart Odane Bent, 30, a former Okinawa-based Marine who has confessed to premeditated homicide in Ryan's death, Taiwan News said. Hobbie — who served in the Army between late 1991 and spring 1997, according to his military records — stands accused of helping Bent and two others cover up the crime by destroying evidence.

After Bent confessed to his role in the crime, he began to cooperate with police, according to Taiwan media reports. He allegedly told them he and Oren Shlomo Mayer, a 37-year-old Israeli-American tattoo shop owner and former Israel Defense Forces soldier, "lured" Ryan to a riverside park in New Taipei City.

Bent and Mayer were reportedly involved in a local drug ring that sold marijuana, as was Ryan, the Taiwan News said. The pair suspected Ryan had become a police informant when some of their colleagues were arrested on drug-related charges.



Courtesy of Facebook

Jason Hobbie, 46, was arrested last month and is now the fourth suspect being held in the death of a 43-year-old Canadian man killed and dismembered with machetes on the evening of Aug. 21, according to Taiwan News.

Bent told authorities that Mayer choked an inebriated Ryan to death with a wire chord before they chopped him up with machetes, Taiwan News reported. They then placed Ryan's body in plastic trash bags and threw them into the river. The body was discovered the next day, and police immediately began to zero in on Bent.

Bent told police that Wu Hsuan, a 21-year-old Taiwanese-Canadian nightclub promoter, acted as a lookout during the

killing, Taiwan News reported. He was also found to have purchased the machetes used in the crime.

Bent also said that another man, who Mayer referred to only as "I.J.," and who Mayer had given a tattoo of a bald eagle on his upper back, was also involved, Taipei Times said. Police later identified that man as Hobbie.

According to Bent, Mayer called Hobbie on the night of the killing and asked him to buy gasoline and fireworks and bring them to the crime scene, local media reports said. He allegedly told Hobbie that his scooter had run out of gas.

Hobbie told police he handed over the gas, shot off some fireworks and left the scene without witnessing or participating in the homicide, Taipei Times reported, citing police.

However, police intend to indict Hobbie as an accessory to murder, Yonghe Police Precinct Investigation Division Director Lin Chen-jui told Taipei Times. They believe he helped burn Bent and Mayer's bloody clothing.

"We believe [Hobbie] went to the crime scene to provide 2 liters of gasoline for the other suspects," Lin said, according to the news report. "The [homicide] was pre-planned and involved several suspects, who divided their work."

Hobbie was branded a flight risk and ordered held "incommunicado" by a New Taipei court, local media reports said.

Bent and Mayer are also being held pending trial. Wu was arrested but was

later released on about \$10,000 bond. Police said they are investigating his role and were thinking about administering a polygraph.

Hobbie holds an Alien Resident Certificate through his wife, Taiwan News reported. While he has reportedly spent most of his time on the island as an English teacher, he claims to be a chef on social media and ran a business growing and selling vegetables.

Hobbie joined the Army out of Phoenix and served from December 1991 to April 1997, according to his military records. He later joined the 27th Infantry Regiment as a gunner at Fort Ord, Calif., before moving in May 1993 to Fort Carson, Colo., where he served in the 8th Infantry Regiment.

In January 1995, Hobbie went to Fort Benning for airborne school, his records state. Two months later, he was sent to Fort Bragg, N.C., where he joined the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division as an infantryman.

He spent his final two years in the service at Fort Bragg, his records state.

It is unclear if he deployed at all during that time, but his records say he received the Army Achievement Medal with one Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, and badges and bars for various infantryman proficiencies.

The records do not indicate the manner of his discharge, but Hobbie left the service as a specialist.

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PACIFIC

The man behind the medal

Grandson's book tells warts-and-all story of World War II hero

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

On Nov. 22, 1943, Marine 1st Lt. Alexander "Sandy" Bonnyman Jr. led a desperate assault to take a massive, sand-covered bunker holding scores of Japanese troops who had Marines pinned on the northern shore of Betio in the central Pacific atoll of Tarawa.

Bonnyman planned the assault, and his team of 21 engineers and riflemen — dubbed "Forlorn Hope" due to the hopelessness of their mission — charged the bunker and killed a machine gunner perched on top with satchel charge demo devices and flamethrowers. On the summit, they dropped explosive charges down the ventilator openings and sprayed inside the bunker with flaming diesel fuel.

More than 100 Japanese troops were flushed from the blockhouse and immediately killed. About 150 died inside the bunker.

Bonnyman, then 33, made a heroic last stand as he was mortally wounded. His remains were buried on the island and lost to time. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor in 1947 by President Harry Truman.

Captivated by search efforts by the History Flight nonprofit for remains missing on the island, Bonnyman's grandson, journalist and author Clay Bonnyman Evans, first visited Betio in 2010. It was the start of a long journey to find his grandfather's remains and uncover the man behind the medal.

The quest spurred Evans to write "Bones of My Grandfather: Reclaiming a Lost Hero of World War II," published in July.

"His remains had been lost all those years — and so had his story," Evans told Stars and Stripes during a recent phone interview. "I think there is no greater honor when writing about somebody than to be as honest as

'He wasn't some sterling, perfect, Christ-like character with no flaws. The fact that he was a human being like all the rest of us and did a heroic thing, I think, is a better story.'

Clay Bonnyman Evans
author of "Bones of My Grandfather: Reclaiming a Lost Hero of World War II"

you possibly can. He wasn't some sterling, perfect, Christ-like character with no flaws. The fact that he was a human being like all the rest of us and did a heroic thing, I think, is a better story."

The book is a warts-and-all portrayal of a man who has been lionized for his heroic actions and offers a firsthand account of what it is like to "find" a World War II hero, literally and figuratively.

Penance

The book starts with a young Evans, who grew up outside Denver, staring at a beautiful yet haunting portrait of his grandfather by Italian artist Arturo Noci hung above the fireplace in his family's living room. It then juxtaposes the author's life with that of his grandfather.

Evans recalls the conflicting theories about the final resting place of his grandfather — that he had been buried at sea; that he was buried at The National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii as an unknown; that he was still buried somewhere on the trash-covered atoll in the central Pacific.

Evans was interested in World War II as a child, but was surprisingly "incurious" about his grandfather, he wrote. While his mother, Fran Bonnyman Evans, proudly displayed her father's Medal of Honor, few relatives spoke of him. The past was just too painful.

As he came of age in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, Evans said he saw military service as a

"lowly calling," and wrote "furious" anti-war poems. Deep down, he believed he didn't measure up to his grandfather.

Bonnyman had been a football star; Evans had quit his team to read science-fiction novels. Bonnyman was a good son; Evans was rebellious and felt constrained by his family.

Bonnyman was a Southern gentleman. "I was an entitled, party-hearty, spoiled kid who had little use for authority," Evans wrote in the book.

Bonnyman had been a successful businessman; Evans wanted to become a writer.

"Most importantly, Sandy Bon-

nyman had sacrificed his life for his country; I wouldn't even consider joining the military," Evans wrote in the book. "I knew I was no Sandy Bonnyman; I would win no medals. ... I would spend a lifetime seeking out adventure, risk and challenge in a never-ending campaign to prove to the world — to myself — that I was no coward."

It wasn't until he was in his 30s that he became interested in his grandfather. He read books about the fight on Tarawa and dug Marine histories out of old trunks in his mother's basement.

SEE MEDAL ON PAGE 7



Photos courtesy of Clay Bonnyman Evans

Marine 1st Lt. Alexander "Sandy" Bonnyman Jr. was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.



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Author Clay Bonnyman Evans poses atop the Japanese blockhouse in the Tarawa atoll where his grandfather, Marine 1st Lt. Alexander "Sandy" Bonnyman Jr., fought and died in November 1943.

PACIFIC

Medal: Author says his grandfather always had to be where the action was

FROM PAGE 6

In 2009, Evans was shocked to learn on Tarawa-related websites that two separate civilian researchers claimed the remains of about 500 servicemembers, including his grandfather, were still on Betio.

"My family wasn't even aware that my grandfather was still buried on Tarawa," he said.

A year later, with the support of an American Legion post and the blessings of the now-defunct Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, he went to Betio. History Flight and its founder and director, Mark Noah, were also there, earnestly searching for his grandfather's remains.

"As a kind of penance for my long neglect, I embarked on a quest to exhume my grandfather's life, and if I were lucky, perhaps even his body," Evans wrote.

Imperfect hero

Bonnyman was born in Atlanta on May 2, 1910, but the family relocated to Knoxville, Tenn., when he was 6 years old.

The son of a coal-mining magnate, Bonnyman was an adventurous child who enjoyed riding his pony and fishing. Well-educated and cultured, he had traveled to Europe twice by age 12.

Once he was able to drive, he would stay out late. Barred from doing so, he would sneak out, sip-hon gas from other vehicles and take his Ford Model T.

He attended Princeton University, where he was captain of the football team until poor grades forced him out. He took a job with his father's mining outfit before striking out on his own.

Bonnyman had a reputation as a ladies' man. He was a hard drinker and hell-raiser, and before joining the service, he was once shot in the chest during a dispute in a gas station parking lot.

Bonnyman later married Josephine and had three daughters. He was a daredevil and a black sheep.

Evans describes his grandfather pacing with "intense agitation" upon hearing that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. Just two months later, on Feb. 8, 1942, the successful 32-year-old copper mine operator joined the Marine Corps.

Bonnyman was an enlisted combat engineer and saw his first bit of combat at Guadalcanal, which ended in February 1943. Before leaving for the Solomon Islands, he attended Officer Can-

didate School and was promoted to second lieutenant Feb. 7, 1943.

The energetic executive officer of the 2nd Battalion Shore Party, 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division always had to be where the action was. He came ashore at Betio on Nov. 20, 1943. The Marines were met by dozens of hidden steel-reinforced concrete bunkers and pillboxes, 20 gun mounts around the island's perimeter containing mountain guns, cannon and artillery, tanks, anti-aircraft and machine guns with interlocking fields of fire.

On the third day of battle, Bonnyman led a charge on Red Beach 3 to take the hulking Japanese blockhouse.

"He liked adrenaline; we would call him an adrenaline junky today," Evans said. "It put a smile on my face just as I realized over and over again and seeing, 'Oh my God, that's really who he was,' and I think that it's fair to say that's why he did what he did at Tarawa. He just was a guy who wasn't going to sit back and let other people do stuff, and I found out he was very human."

Finding Sandy

After the smoke cleared from the bloody 76-hour battle, more than 4,000 Japanese lay dead, along with more than 1,000 Marines. Trenches were dug and the dead were buried. Their identifications were recorded when possible and the trenches were marked on maps. However, with the assault on the Marshall Islands two months away, Betio was immediately mobilized. Grave markers were destroyed or removed to make way for construction. Marines from the 2nd Division departed, leaving no witnesses behind to note where the graves had been.

Bonnyman lay lost with 39 other Marines in a trench known as Cemetery 27, according to documents obtained by History Flight.

In "Bones of My Grandfather," Evans details Tarawa's history, the lead-up to the battle, the fight and the details of his exhausting investigation into his grandfather's life.

He interviewed countless veterans of the fighting on Betio and loaned out volumes of source material and family archives to paint a vivid picture of the bloody battle and his grandfather's role in it.

He also details how Mark Noah and History Flight became involved in the search for remains on the island.

Noah's nonprofit — dedicated



Author Clay Bonnyman Evans stands in 2015 on the Betio Island dig site that held the remains of his grandfather. Courtesy of Clay Bonnyman Evans

to preserving and honoring modern-day military aviation history and aircrew combat veterans — began search and recovery efforts on Betio in 2006, Noah previously told Stars and Stripes. Since then, the group has found and repatriated more than 120 Marines and other servicemembers lost on the island. It continues to partner with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, which was founded after the reorganization of JPAC.

On May 29, 2015, Evans was on Betio when History Flight unearthed the remains of his grandfather. His bones told the story of the manner of his death and, coupled with witness interviews, supported his Medal of Honor citation and dispelled any questions of his valor.

Yet, in the course of writing his book, Evans found that his grandfather's image had been whitewashed, and he exhumed an imperfect man who became a perfect hero.

"It was somehow comforting to know that my grandfather also had fought with his father, dropped out of college, upended family expectations. Impulsively sought adventure, chose the wrong women and drank too much," Evans wrote.

Evans said his family had put Bonnyman "behind glass" to become an "eternally perfect Sir Galahad." It was gratifying to humanize his grandfather and see the source of some of his own traits that troubled family members.

"I want him to be remembered exactly as he was, an incredibly charismatic guy with born leadership skills who was a human being with flaws and quirks, who was exactly the right person, at the right time to get that job done," Evans said. "I feel that I've done a small service on behalf of my grandfather's reputation."

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"He just was a guy who wasn't going to sit back and let other people do stuff, and I found out he was very human."

Clay Bonnyman Evans
grandson

MILITARY

Chinese air force to expand space presence

By JESSE JOHNSON
Japan Times

The Chinese air force intends to expand its presence into space as part of its plan to become a "world-class force," state-run media reported Tuesday, quoting top military officers.

The China Daily newspaper said senior Col. Wang Zhonghua, head of the Planning Bureau of the air force's Equipment Department, told a news conference Sunday in the city of Zhuhai that the branch "spares no efforts in handling all threats, and is gearing up to extend its reach beyond the clouds and into space."

Wang's news conference coincided with the 69th anniversary of the air force's founding, and was part of the six-day 12th China International Aviation and Aero-space Exhibition that wrapped up

Sunday in the city.

The top officer was quoted as saying that the air force is currently undergoing "revolutionary changes that will generate a system that can function in future warfare scenarios."

Lt. Gen. Xu Anxiang, the branch's deputy commander, also outlined what the report called "a multiphase road map for building a strong, modern" air force.

The first step, he said, would be the establishment of a strategic force by 2020 that "will have integrated air and space capability and balanced strength in both defensive and offensive operations."

"When that is achieved, fourth-generation equipment will serve as the backbone of the air force's arsenal. Information-based systematic combat capabilities will be enhanced," he added.

According to the report, the air

force categorizes its top weapons, including the J-20 stealth fighter jet and Y-20 strategic transport aircraft, as fourth-generation equipment, while the J-10 and J-16 combat fighters are classified as third-generation.

Xu said the following phase would see the air force further improve its strategic capabilities and modernize its organizational structure, human resources and weaponry.

"The building of a modern strategic air force will essentially be achieved by 2035," Xu said.

Ultimately, the air force will be fully transformed into a world-class force by the mid-21st century, he added.

The Chinese air force is the largest in the region and the third-largest in the world, according to the Pentagon's annual report on Chinese military power. This

year's report said the branch "is working to become a 'strategic' air force capable of long-range power projection" and is "closing the gap with the U.S. Air Force across a spectrum of capabilities, gradually eroding long-standing U.S. technical advantages," including in space.

Earlier this year, the administration of President Donald Trump proposed the creation of a Space Force as a sixth branch of America's armed forces, with Vice President Mike Pence in August announcing a plan that would see its establishment by 2020.

"If the United States is to maintain military advantage in space as President Trump has promised — and as his new Space Force is meant to do — U.S. policy and strategic decisions should be informed by an understanding of China's

ambitions to become an 'aerospace superpower' — and how the Chinese military has reorganized itself to seek dominance in space," Elsa Kania, an adjunct fellow at the Center for a New American Security think tank, wrote in a September commentary for the website Defense One.

According to this year's Defense Department report on China's military power, Beijing's space program "continues to mature rapidly" — despite its public stance against the militarization of space.

The Chinese military "continues to invest in improving its capabilities" and "is developing multiple counterspace capabilities to degrade and deny adversary use of space-based assets during a crisis or conflict," which strategists regard "as central to modern warfare," the report said.

Outflanked: Commission warns of military complacency

FROM FRONT PAGE

"There is a strong fear of complacency, that people have become so used to the United States achieving what it wants in the world, to include militarily, that it isn't heeding the warning signs," said Kathleen Hicks, a former top Pentagon official during the Obama administration and one of the commissioners. "It's the flashing red that we are trying to relay."

The picture of the national security landscape that the 12-person commission sketched is a bleak one in which an American military that has enjoyed undisputed dominance for decades is failing to receive the resources, innovation and prioritization its leaders need to outmuscle China and Russia in a race for military might reminiscent of the Cold War.

The military balance has shifted adversely for the U.S. in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, undermining the confidence of American allies and increasing the likelihood of military conflict, the commission found after reviewing classified documents, receiving Pentagon briefings and interviewing top defense officials.

"The U.S. military could suffer unacceptably high casualties and loss of major capital assets in its next conflict. It might struggle to win, or perhaps lose, a war against China or Russia," the report said. "The United States is particularly at risk of being overwhelmed should its military be forced to fight on two or more fronts simultaneously."

In a list of 32 recommendations, the commission urged the Pentagon to explain more clearly how it intends to defeat major-power rivals in competition and war. It assailed the strategy for relying at times on "questionable assumptions and weak analysis" and leaving "unanswered critical

questions."

Eric Edelman, a top Pentagon official during the Bush administration, who co-chaired the commission along with retired admiral Gary Roughead, said the report wrestled with the consequences of years of ignored warnings about the erosion of American military might.

Russia and China have "learned from what we've done. They've learned from our success. And while we've been off doing a different kind of warfare, they've been prepared for a kind of warfare at the high end that we really haven't engaged for a very long time," Edelman told Michael Morell, the former acting director of the CIA and a fellow member of the commission, during a forthcoming episode of Morell's podcast, "Intelligence Matters."

Edelman said people had lost sight of how competition in the national security environment had become for the U.S., and argued that for a lot of reasons the American public and Congress haven't been as attentive to the urgency of the situation as they should be.

The commission argued that despite a \$716 billion American defense budget this year, which is four times the size of China's and more than 10 times that of Russia, the effort to reshape the U.S. defense establishment to cope with current threats is under-resourced. It recommended that Congress lift budget caps on defense spending in the next two years that in the past have hobbled the military's ability to plan for the long term.

"It is beyond the scope of our work to identify the exact dollar amount required to fully fund the military's needs," the report concluded. "Yet available resources are clearly insufficient to fulfill the strategy's ambitious goals, including that of ensuring that [the Defense Department] can



PAVEL GOLOVIN/AP

Russian troops march in Moscow in May during the Victory Day military parade to celebrate 73 years since the end of WWII and the defeat of Nazi Germany. A new report warns that the U.S. is in danger of losing its military edge over Russia and China.

defeat a major-power adversary while deterring other enemies simultaneously."

The call for even more robust defense spending comes as the Democrats take over the House and seek rollbacks of key Pentagon programs. It also comes after the White House instructed the Pentagon to pare back its planned budget for the coming year by 4.5 percent, or about \$33 billion, after the federal deficit increased sharply following last year's tax cut.

White House national security adviser John Bolton recently said he expected the defense budget to remain relatively flat in the coming years as the administration seeks to cut discretionary spending and suggested the Pentagon would need to reshape the military with funds derived from cuts to other areas.

Money saved from planned Pentagon reforms will prove insufficient to see through the kind of investment the military needs

to see through the new national defense strategy, the commission found. It also said Congress should look at the entire federal budget, including entitlement spending and tax revenue, to put the nation on more stable financial footing rather than slash defense spending.

To counter Russia and China, the commission said the Navy should expand its submarine fleet and sealift forces; the Air Force should introduce more reconnaissance platforms and stealth long-range fighters and bombers; and the Army should pursue more armor, long-range precision missiles and air defense and logistical forces.

In its recommendations, the report advocated seeing through the modernization of the U.S. nuclear arsenal and putting a top Pentagon official in charge of developing additional air and missile defenses.

Another area of focus for the commission was innovation.

It described current Pentagon acquisition programs as too risk-averse and urged the Defense Department and Congress to create a new category of pilot programs aimed at "leap-ahead" technologies that could serve as breakthroughs to help retain American military dominance.

The report also resurfaced questions about the civilian-military divide that arose after retired Marine Corps general Jim Mattis took over as defense secretary, thanks to a vote in Congress that waived a requirement for military officers to be out of uniform for 10 years before serving in that role.

Without singling out Mattis, the commission warned that "responsibility on key strategic and policy issues has increasingly migrated to the military" and urged Congress to exercise oversight to "reverse the unhealthy trend in which decision-making is drifting increasingly toward the military on issues of national importance."

MILITARY



KEITH JAMES/Courtesy of the U.S. Air Force

Airmen with the 8th Expeditionary Air Mobility Squadron push pallets for a combat air drop onboard a C-17 Globemaster III at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, on Sept. 24. Effective Nov. 1, airmen with 365-day deployment orders can move their goods and families to their follow-on base before they deploy.

Air Force allows families to move ahead of deployment

By BRIAN FERGUSON
Stars and Stripes

Airmen leaving for yearlong deployments will no longer have to return before moving their goods and families to their next permanent duty station.

The change, which went into effect Nov. 1, means Air Force families have the option of an extra year at their next duty station while a servicemember is deployed.

Airmen can apply for their follow-on permanent change of station orders up to four months prior to a yearlong deployment.

"This change recognizes the need for us to increase stability and predictability for our airmen and their families and helps our airmen focus on their mission while deployed," Lt. Gen. Brian Kelly, Air Force deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services said in a statement.

Previously, it took at least 60 days before airmen on yearlong deployments were offered permanent station assignments. Orders weren't published any

earlier than 120 days prior to the reporting date at the new station, making it difficult for families to plan, officials stated.

Approximately 400 airmen per year are selected for what the Air Force terms as 365-day extended deployments.

The new policy also allows airmen to move directly from their deployment to their new permanent station, the statement said.

The change comes after the Air Force Personnel Center chartered a working group last year to find better ways to accommodate and incentivize year-long deployments.

"This is about readiness. This aids our resilience and helps us take care of our families," Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Kalet H. Wright said on his Facebook page. "Another win."

The new policy only applies to deployments and not to what the Air Force classifies as unaccompanied one-year assignments to bases such as Osan Air Base, South Korea.

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Guard identifies airman who drowned

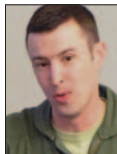
By CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

The Air National Guard identified an airman pronounced dead last week after being found unresponsive near Guam's Tumon Bay.

Capt. John Goeres, whose age was not released, was a KC-135R Stratotanker pilot with Alaska Air National Guard's 168th Air Refueling Squadron, according to an Air National Guard statement.

Air Force officials on Guam investigated Goeres' death and concluded that he died of an accidental drowning, according to the Air National Guard.

He began his career in 2004, enlisting with the Oregon Air National Guard's 173rd Fighter Wing in Klamath Falls, Ore., the statement said. He had been with the 168th ARS since 2012 when he was selected to become a pilot.



Goeres

"Capt. John Goeres was a trusted and gifted aviator, a leader who rose from the enlisted ranks to fly jets for the Alaska Air National Guard," 168th Wing commander Col. Bryan White said in the statement.

"Our hearts are saddened by the sudden and tragic loss of such a fine young man," White added.

Goeres is the second U.S. servicemember to die on Guam this fall. On Sept. 28, Petty Officer 3rd Class Zahir Hakeem, of the USS Ronald Reagan, went missing while swimming near Haputo Beach.

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Policy: Some soldiers with medical issues will be exempt from tougher new guidelines

FROM FRONT PAGE

Commanders who determine that soldiers classified as nondeployable for administrative reasons are unlikely to resolve their issues within six months can begin the separation process immediately, according to the Army policy.

It was not clear Tuesday how many soldiers would be removed from the service through the new policy, said Maj. Gen. Joseph Calloway, the service's military personnel management director. He estimated about 10,000 soldiers were listed now as nondeployable for administrative reasons.

Likewise, soldiers with a permanent medical condition that affects their ability to perform their jobs will be referred to the Disability Evaluation System, which will determine whether they can remain in the Army, according to the policy.

The Army has reduced its number of nondeployable soldiers since the Pentagon mandated the services develop their own guidelines. Last fall, the Army reported about 121,000 nondeployable soldiers, or about 15 percent of the force, across active-duty units, the National Guard and the reserves. That tally dropped to about 59,000 as of November, Calloway said.

The reduction is primarily due to the Army's changing view on who is considered nondeployable. For example, the service no longer considers soldiers nondeployable simply for missing a yearly medical or dental exam, though soldiers are still required to receive those exams.

"That is a huge jump," Calloway told reporters Tuesday at the Pentagon. "... We considered every single one of those soldiers

who had not gotten their medical exam, nondeployable, when we knew in fact that over 90 percent of them were deployable. So, we were overly conservative in the way we reported those."

About 80 percent of the soldiers who remain categorized as nondeployable are so for medical reasons. Some of the soldiers with medical issues are exempt from the policy, such as troops injured in combat and others who are pregnant or on maternity leave.

The policy changes reflect the Army's attempt to change the service's culture to ensure soldiers want to remain deployable, Calloway said. The guidelines for the first time explicitly defines what makes soldiers deployable, he said.

The new policy defines soldiers who are deployable as:

- Soldiers who are cleared to work in "any environment in which the Army is operating or could operate," such as austere areas with extreme heat, cold or attitude

- Soldiers who can carry and employ an assigned weapon

- Soldiers capable of executing all tasks required of their job or mission

- Soldiers who can operate while wearing full body armor, helmet, eye protection, gloves and equipment to protect against chemical or biological hazards

- Soldiers capable of passing the Army Physical Fitness Test or meeting the specific physical demands of the tasks required for the deployment.

Commanders in the rank of colonel or higher can exempt soldiers from one or more of those categories, the policy states.

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Navy wants to expand Hawaii training events

Associated Press

HONOLULU — U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command has proposed tripling the number of training events allowed on non-federal lands in Hawaii for Navy SEALs and other special operations forces.

The Navy published a draft environmental assessment last week on the plan to expand training activities from Oahu and the Big Island to include sites on Kauai, Maui, Molokai and Lanai.

The review does not anticipate a significant environmental impact from the expanded training scheduled to begin in 2019.

"Naval special operations personnel must be ready for a variety of military operations — from large-scale conflict to maritime security and humanitarian assis-

tance/disaster relief — to respond to the dynamic, social, political, economic and environmental issues that may arise," Navy officials said in the report.

The training activities fit into three categories based on land, air and water, according to the report. They will occasionally integrate personnel from the Army, the Marine Corps and Air Force.

Water-based training consists of swimming and diving, using submersible small vehicles, and moving personnel.

Land-based training includes personnel beach crossings, clearing buildings with simulated munitions, climbing, and reconnaissance activities.

Air-based training includes the use of drop zones, parachute landings or suspension trainings.

NATION

Calif. fires death toll at 48 with many still missing

By MARTHA MENDOZA
AND GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press

CHICO, Calif. — A message board at a shelter for the many people who fled California's deadliest wildfire is filled with photos of the missing, as well as pleas for any information about relatives and friends.

"I hope you are okay," reads one handwritten note on the board filled with white and yellow sheets of notebook paper. Another had a picture of a missing man: "If seen, please have him call."

Authorities on Tuesday reported six more fatalities from the Northern California blaze, bringing the total number of dead so far to 48. They haven't disclosed the total number still missing, but earlier in the week that figure was more than 200.

Butte County Sheriff Kory Honea said a list of the missing would be released soon and that 100 National Guard troops would help teams already looking for remains.

"We want to be able to cover as much ground as quickly as we possibly can," he said. "This is a very difficult task."

As authorities increased ef-

forts, people waited for any word on those still not found.

Greg Gibson was one of the people searching the message board Tuesday, hoping to find information about his neighbors. They've been reported missing, but he doesn't know if they tried to escape or hesitated a few min-

utes longer than he

did before fleeing Paradise, the town of 27,000 which was consumed last Thursday. About 7,700 homes were destroyed.

"It happened so fast. It would have been such an easy decision to stay, but it was the wrong choice," Gibson said from the Neighborhood Church in Chico.

More than 1,000 people were at shelters set up for evacuees. Inside the church, evacuee Harold Taylor chatted with new-found friends.

Taylor, 72, a Vietnam veteran

'We didn't have 10 minutes to get out of there. It was already in flames downtown.'

Harold Taylor
evacuee



JOHN LOCHER/AP

Jim Clark on Tuesday visits what is left of his home that was demolished by the Camp Fire in Paradise, Calif.

who walks with a cane, said he received a call Thursday morning to evacuate immediately. He saw the flames leaping up behind his house, left with the clothes on his back and barely made it out alive.

Along the way, he tried to persuade his neighbor to get in his car and evacuate with him, but the neighbor declined. He doesn't know what happened to his friend.

"We didn't have 10 minutes to get out of there," he said. "It was already in flames downtown, all the local restaurants and stuff," he said.

The search for the dead was drawing on portable devices that can identify someone's genetic

material in a couple of hours rather than days or weeks.

"In many circumstances, without rapid DNA technology, it's just such a lengthy process," said Frank DePaolo, a deputy commissioner of the New York City medical examiners' office, which has been at the forefront of the science of identifying human remains since 9/11 and is exploring how it might use a rapid DNA device.

Before the Paradise tragedy, the deadliest single fire on record in California was a 1933 blaze in Griffith Park in Los Angeles that killed 29.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said he canceled a trip to Asia and

will visit the fire zones Wednesday and Thursday.

The cause of the fires remained under investigation, but they broke out around the time and place two utilities reported equipment trouble.

Gov.-elect Gavin Newsom, who takes office in January, stepped questions about what action should be taken against utilities if their power lines are found to be responsible.

People who lost homes in the Northern California blaze sued Pacific Gas & Electric Co. Tuesday, accusing the utility of negligence and blaming it for the fire.

An email to PG&E was not immediately returned.

Residents return, but Southern Calif. fire still has life

By AMANDA LEE MYERS
AND BRIAN SKOLOFF
Associated Press

MALIBU, Calif. — Thousands of people returned to neighborhoods evacuated during Southern California's deadly wildfire but officials said the threat is far from over.

The huge blaze briefly gained renewed life Tuesday with a flare-up in the Santa Monica Mountains before water- and fire retardant-dropping aircraft beat it back.

However, except for an apartment building that burned in coastal Malibu, there was little sign of fire activity elsewhere in the vast burn zone west of Los Angeles.

The weeklong blaze in Ventura and Los Angeles counties had blackened an area about the size of Denver and was 40 percent contained. Since last Thursday, the blaze had marched steadily toward the sea, engulfing mobile homes, scenic canyon getaways and celebrity estates.

Firefighters could make more progress if relentless Santa Ana winds start to diminish as predicted.

Authorities allowed residents back into several communities Tuesday, including a section of Malibu. Other areas have been repopulated since the weekend. Tens of thousands of people remained under evacuation orders, down from a high of as many as 250,000.

Officials tempered optimism with cau-



JAE C. HONG/AP

Roger Kelton searches Tuesday through the remains of his mother-in-law's home consumed by the Woolsey Fire in Agoura Hills, Calif.

tion, saying there were hotspots and pockets of unburned vegetation that could ignite.

"We are not out of the woods yet. We still have some incredibly tough conditions ahead of us," Ventura County Fire Chief

Mark Lorenzen said.

The death toll from the Woolsey fire stood at two — a pair of adults found last week in a car overtaken by flames. They have not been identified.

The number of homes and other struc-

tures destroyed had reached 435 but that number was sure to rise, warned Los Angeles County Fire Chief Darryl Osby. Damage assessments were continuing, with crews having to gain access to canyon areas on foot.

Some people who stayed behind in coastal communities that were cut off by road closures got supplies by boat. Gas, food, baby wipes and horse pellets were among the items brought ashore in the Paradise Cove area of Malibu. Some residents donned wetsuits and swam ashore with cases of water and beer.

The fire had burned near 152 square miles of brush and timber, destroying more than 80 percent of National Parks Service land in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

A forecast of possible rain next week would help firefighters but also raised the prospect of potential mud flows, Osby said.

The cause of the Southern California fires remained under investigation.

Southern California Edison said last week that it reported to the California Public Utilities Commission "out of an abundance of caution" that there was an outage on an electrical circuit near where the fire started Thursday but there was no indication its equipment was involved in the fire reported two minutes after the outage.

NATION

Overheating machines hinder recount in Fla.

BY TERRY SPENCER
AND GARY FINEOUT
Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Florida's election recount drama is intensifying as lawyers return to court and tallying machines break down ahead of a Thursday deadline to complete reviews of the senate and governor races.

Much of the trouble centers on the Democratic stronghold of Palm Beach County, where tallying machines have overheated. That's caused mismatched results with the recount of 174,000 early voting ballots, forcing

workers to go back and redo their work with no time to spare.

A mechanic was flown in to fix the problems, but "we don't have a lot of assurances," Palm Beach County Elections Supervisor Susan Bucher told WPTV Tuesday night. Bucher did not immediately respond to messages from The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, lawyers for Democrats planned to ask a federal judge on Wednesday to set aside the state law mandating that mailed-in votes be thrown out if the signature on the envelope doesn't match the signa-

nature on file with election authorities.

The developments are sure to fuel frustrations among Democrats and Republicans as the recount unfolds more than a week after Election Day. Democrats have urged state officials to do whatever it takes to make sure every vote is counted. But Republicans, including President Donald Trump, have argued without evidence that voter fraud threatens to steal races from the GOP.

The state elections department and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, both run by Republican appointees, have

said they have seen no evidence of voter fraud. A Broward County judge challenged anyone who has evidence of fraud to file a report.

As it all plays out, the Republican candidates for governor and Senate, Ron DeSantis and Rick Scott, still hold the narrowest of leads over their Democratic counterparts, Andrew Gillum and Bill Nelson.

While the counting goes on, there are now four lawsuits pending in a Tallahassee federal court that seek to throw out ballot counting rules or extend the Thursday 5 p.m. deadline for recounts.

Uncertainty in Ga.'s gubernatorial race lingers amid legal wrangling

BY KATE BRUMBACK
AND BILL BARROW
Associated Press

ATLANTA — After multiple federal court rulings and a flurry of legal filings, uncertainty looms over Georgia's still-undecided race for governor.

Unofficial results in one of the nation's hottest midterm contests give Republican Brian Kemp a slim majority. But Democrat Stacey Abrams maintains that enough uncounted absentee, mail-in and provisional ballots remain to force a Dec. 4 runoff and keep alive her bid to become the first black woman in American history to be elected governor of a state. Other down-ballot contests also remain undecided.

In the week since voters went to the polls, arguments over certain provisional and absentee ballots

have been presented at a dizzying pace before several judges in federal courts.

Among them was a lawsuit filed Sunday by Abrams' campaign seeking a one-day extension of the deadline for county election officials to certify their results. As a hearing drew to a close just before the 5 p.m. Tuesday deadline, U.S. District Judge Steve Jones declined to extend it, saying all the counties had likely already certified their results or were about to, and there were other protections in place.

The campaign asked Jones to order county election officials to accept any absentee ballots with missing or insufficient information as long as that doesn't "substantially obstruct" officials from verifying the absentee voter's identity. It also asked him to order

county election officials to accept voter information that's submitted to fix issues with provisional ballots, and to count those votes, until 5 p.m. Wednesday. And it asked that provisional ballots cast by voters in the wrong county be counted as if the voter had shown up at the wrong precinct.

In a separate case, U.S. District Judge Leigh May on Tuesday ordered Gwinnett County election officials not to reject absentee ballots just because the voter's birth year is missing or wrong, and to count any votes that were cast that way. She also ordered the county to delay certification of its election results until those ballots have been counted.



JOHN BAZEMORE/AP

People hold signs as they protest the Georgia election in the rotunda of the state capitol building in Atlanta on Tuesday.

Calif. Dem upsets GOP incumbent for House seat

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — First-time candidate Josh Harder defeated four-term Republican U.S. Rep. Jeff Denham on Tuesday in California's farm belt, giving Democrats their fourth pickup of a GOP House seat in California.

Harder, 32, a venture capitalist, had anchored his campaign to Denham's vote against the Affordable Care Act while arguing that he would push for universal health care in Congress. He also argued that Denham and other Washington Republicans ignored poverty and health care in the agricultural 10th District in California's Central Valley.

"Washington is broken because our leaders have put party over country. I pledge that I will always put this community before anything in Washington," Harder said in a statement.

As ballot-counting continued, Democrats gained ground in two undecided House races in Orange County, raising the possibility of a Democratic sweep of four closely contested congressional

seats in the one-time Republican stronghold.

In the 45th District in Orange County, Democrat Katie Porter jumped into a 261-vote lead over Republican Rep. Mimi Walters after trailing the incumbent since Election Day.

And in the 39th District, anchored in Orange County, Democrat Gil Cisneros tightened the gap with Republican Young Kim.

Earlier, Democrats claimed the seats of Republican Reps. Dana Rohrabacher in the county's 48th District and retiring Darrell Issa in the 49th District, which cuts through the southern end of the county.

With votes continuing to be counted, Harder's edge has grown after Denham grabbed a slim lead on Election Day. After the latest update, Harder had a 4,919-vote lead out of about 185,000 votes counted, a margin too large for the congressman to overcome with remaining votes.

Denham's campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

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BUSINESS/WEATHER

Pilots: Boeing didn't disclose jet's features

By DAVID KOENIG
The Associated Press

Boeing didn't tell airline pilots about features of a new flight-control system in its 737 MAX that reportedly is a focus of the investigation into last month's deadly crash in Indonesia, according to pilots who fly the jet in the U.S.

Pilots said they were not trained in new features of an anti-stall system in the aircraft that differs from that in previous models of the popular 737.

The automated system is designed to help pilots avoid raising the plane's nose too high, which can cause the plane to stall,

or lose the aerodynamic lift needed to keep flying. The system automatically pushes the nose of the plane down.

But if that nose-down command is triggered by faulty sensor readings — as suspected in the Lion Air crash — pilots can struggle to control the plane, which can go into a dive and perhaps crash, according to a Boeing safety bulletin and safety regulators.

The bulletin included new details on how to stop a runaway series of events from leading to a crash, pilots say.

"It is something we did not have before in any of our training. It wasn't in our

books. American didn't have it," said Dennis Tajer, a 737 pilot and spokesman for the pilots union at American Airlines. "Now I have to wonder what else is there?"

Jon Weeks, a 737 captain and president of the pilots union at Southwest, said he couldn't recall a similar omission in a Boeing operating manual.

"I was not pleased. How could something like this happen? We want to be given the information to keep our pilots, our passengers and our families safe," he said.

Weeks said he is satisfied that "we have been given, finally, the correct information."

The MAX is the newest version of the twin-engine Boeing 737.

Boeing Chairman and CEO Dennis Muilenburg said Tuesday that the Chicago-based company remains confident the MAX is a safe airplane. He said Boeing did not withhold operating details.

"We ensure that we provide all of the information that is needed to safely fly our airplanes," Muilenburg told Fox Business Network.

He said Boeing bulletins to airlines and pilots "point them back to existing flight procedures" to handle the kind of sensor problem suspected in last month's crash.

Amazon NYC home is in tax 'opportunity zone'

By BERNARD CONDON
AND STEPHEN BRAUN
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Much of the New York City neighborhood selected by Amazon for one of its new headquarters is in a federal "opportunity zone," a designation created by President Donald Trump's tax overhaul that offers developers potentially millions of dollars in capital gains tax breaks to invest in high-poverty, low-income areas.

Critics question whether Long Island City, the fast-gentrifying Queens neighborhood across the East River from the skyscrapers of midtown Manhattan, needs such breaks.

Median income around Amazon's planned campus is \$130,000 a year, poverty is half the city average and new buildings were going up long before the tax overhaul.

"All you have to do is look at the skyline from Manhattan. You can see billions of dollars of private

investment there already," said Don Peebles, a real estate developer based in New York. "Long Island City doesn't strike me as high on the list for needing extensive tax incentives to stimulate economic development."

Under the new tax law, officials in each state designated 8,700 such zones across the country. Nearly 35 million Americans live in such areas, communities that in most cases have higher poverty and unemployment rates than other U.S. communities or contain or are near pockets in desperate need of development.

The state choices were finalized only after approval by Treasury Department officials in July. The site of Amazon's other new headquarters in Crystal City, Va., was not in an opportunity zone.

Amazon did not mention the Long Island City opportunity zone tax breaks Tuesday in any of its announcements about the new campus. Company spokesman Adam Sedo declined to provide details about whether Amazon

plans to take advantage of them. Craig Bernstein, founder of the investment fund OPZ Capital, said the capital gains break is good public policy because it helps push investors to put up the money for new housing, which may be in high demand once Amazon fills an expected 25,000 new jobs in the neighborhood.

"This will help expedite the process of building up the surrounding area," Bernstein said.

Bernstein said his fund is looking at investing in two buildings near the Amazon site to develop into mixed retail-residential space. With Amazon moving in, he said, he sees another reason to take a risk: a "captive audience" of workers looking for apartments and shops.

Separately, Amazon is tapping New York state for grants and tax breaks worth more than \$1.5 billion, the richest in state history and more than triple those offered by Virginia.

Investors who plow capital gains into Opportunity Zone

projects can defer taxes on those gains up to 2026.

If they decide not to cash out on their investment for up to seven years, they receive another benefit: They get to exclude up to 15 percent of those gains from taxes. And they can completely exclude paying taxes on any further appreciation of those gains if they hold onto the investment for a decade.

Capital gains taxes can be as high as 23.8 percent.

MARKET WATCH	
Nov. 13, 2018	
Dow Jones Industrials	-100.69 25,286.49
Nasdaq composite	0.01 7,200.87
Standard & Poor's 500	-4.04 2,722.18
Russell 2000	-3.99 1,514.80

EXCHANGE RATES	
Military rates	
Euro costs (Nov. 14)	\$1.1590
Dollar buys (Nov. 14)	69.8628
British pound (Nov. 14)	\$1.33
Japanese yen (Nov. 14)	111.00
South Korean won (Nov. 14)	1,044.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (dinar)	0.3770
British pound	\$1.2995
Canada (dollar)	1.3220
China (yuan)	6.8514
Denmark (krone)	5.5835
Egypt (pound)	17.9269
Euro	\$1.1335/0.8822
Hong Kong (dollar)	7.8327
Hungary (forint)	284.45
Israel (shekel)	3.6924
Japan (yen)	113.91
Kuwait (dinar)	0.2849
Norway (krone)	8.4702
Philippines (peso)	53.96
Saudi Arabia (riyal)	3.79
Singapore (dollar)	1.3789
South Korea (won)	1,130.96
Taiwan (New Taiwan dollar)	1.0069
Thailand (baht)	32.93
Turkey (lira)	4.771
(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance. For nonmilitary currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)	

INTEREST RATES	
Prime rate	5.25
Discount rate	2.75
Federal funds market rate	2.19
3-month bill	2.34
30-year bond	3.36

WEATHER OUTLOOK



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

NATION

Sources: Trump mulling broad shake-up

By COLLEEN LONG, ZEKE MILLER
AND CATHERINE LUCEY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump is weighing an administration-wide shake-up as he looks to prepare his White House for divided government, but it is unclear who is going and who is staying.

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen was thought to be out as soon as this week, according to two people with knowledge of the issue, but she is now likely to remain in the post for a longer period because there is no obvious successor in place.

Trump has soured on Nielsen and White House chief of staff John Kelly, in part over frustration that his administration is not doing more to address what he has called a crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border, according to the people. But the scope of the contemplated changes is far broader, as Trump

gears up for a wave of Democratic oversight requests and to devote more effort to his own re-election campaign.

According to people familiar with the situation, Trump is also discussing replacing Kelly with Vice President Mike Pence's chief of staff, Nick Ayres. Kelly, a retired Marine general, has been credited with bringing order and process to a chaotic West Wing, but he has fallen out of favor with the president as well as presidential daughter Ivanka Trump and son-in-law Jared Kushner.

Ayers, a seasoned campaign operative, would restore a political mindset to the role, but he faces stiff opposition from some corners of the West Wing, with some aides lobbying Trump directly against the move.

Other changes are afoot, as Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke are being discussed for replacement. And in an extraordinary

move Tuesday, first lady Melania Trump's office called publicly for the firing of Trump's deputy national security adviser, Mira Ricardel.

For all of the talk of churn, Trump often expresses frustration with aides and then does not take action. Talk of Kelly's exit has percolated for months and he remains in place.

Nielsen had hoped to complete one year in the job and leave in December, but it appeared unlikely she would last that long, said two sources. Both people who had knowledge of the debate spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

Curbing illegal immigration is Trump's signature issue — and one he returns to as a way to rally his most loyal supporters. But anyone who takes over at Homeland Security is likely to run up against

the same problems that Nielsen faced. The administration has already tried to clamp down at the border but those efforts have been largely thwarted or watered down due to legal challenges.

Trump also told allies that he never fully trusted Nielsen, whom he associated with President George W. Bush, a longtime foe. He told those close to him that he felt at times that her loyalty was more toward her longtime mentor Kelly than to the president.

Zinke, who faces several ethics investigations, said in interview with the AP on Monday that he has spoken in recent days with Trump, Pence and Kelly about probes into his leadership and they remain supportive. He denied any wrongdoing.

Ross addressed turnover rumors at a Yahoo! Finance summit Tuesday, saying he was in the post to give back to the country and support Trump.

McConnell, Schumer re-elected to leadership

By LISA MASCARO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Senators chose Majority Leader Mitch McConnell for another term leading Republicans and Chuck Schumer for Democrats in closed-door party elections Wednesday lacking the high drama underway on the House side in the midterm election fallout.

Both senators were chosen by acclamation, according to those familiar with the private caucus meetings. McConnell, the Kentucky Republican who expanded GOP ranks in last week's midterm, faced no contest for the job. Democrats returned Schumer's entire leadership team, despite the loss of several incumbents in last week's election.

During a brief photo op in McConnell's Capitol office ahead of voting, McConnell presented his newly elected senators who will take their seats in January.

Among them was Florida's Rick Scott, the Republican governor whose race against incumbent Democratic Sen. Bill Nelson remains undecided.

In the House, the elections were unfolding differently, after Democrats won control of the chamber, putting Republicans in the minority.

The speaker's gavel now out of reach, Republican Kevin McCarthy is poised to take over the shrunken House GOP caucus in closed-door elections that will determine party leadership and set the tone for the new Congress.

The race for minority leader is McCarthy's to lose, but the Californian must fend off a challenge from conservative Rep. Jim Jordan, who has support from the right flank and outside groups as a co-founder of the House Freedom Caucus.

"We've got a plan," McCarthy told reporters as he ducked into a closed-door meeting of House Republicans late Tuesday.

President Donald Trump has stayed largely on the sidelines

ahead of elections that will determine party leadership. Voting for the biggest race, Rep. Nancy Pelosi's bid to return as the Democrats' nominee for speaker, is later this month.

On Wednesday, Jordan told "Fox & Friends" the GOP lost its House majority because it didn't deliver on promises to Americans to secure the U.S.-Mexico border, fund Trump's wall and replace the Obama health care law.

"Some key things we told them we were going to do, we didn't," Jordan said.

At Tuesday's meeting, McCarthy and Jordan encountered frustration, finger-pointing and questions as lawmakers sorted through an election defeat and considered new leadership for the next congressional session.

Republicans complained about the unpopularity of the GOP tax law they blamed for losses in New York and other key states, some attendees told reporters after the meeting. Some in the meeting said Republicans should have tried harder to fulfill Trump's priorities, like funding for the wall with Mexico. They also warned that they need a new fundraising mechanism to compete with the small-dollar online donors that powered Democrats to victory.

"There's a little rawness still," Rep. Mark Walker, R-N.C., who is running unopposed for a downball position as vice chair of the GOP conference, told reporters outside the meeting room. "But there's an opportunity for us to come together and get single-focused on the message."

Jordan told reporters that he made a pitch to his colleagues at a sometimes tense session in the Capitol basement focused on three questions: "Why'd we lose, how do we get it back and what we're up against." The former college wrestling champ said he told Republicans they need a fighter to confront Pelosi and her new majority.



A Juul vaping device, center, is displayed in April among other vaping devices that were confiscated from students at a high school in Marshfield, Mass.

E-cigarette maker Juul halts store sales of some flavors ahead of US crackdown

By MIKE STORBE
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The nation's leading e-cigarette maker is halting store sales of some flavors to deter use by kids.

The move by Juul Labs Inc. comes ahead of an expected U.S. government crackdown on underage sales of flavored e-cigarettes.

Juul said it stopped filling store orders Tuesday for mango, fruit, creme and cucumber pods and will resume sales only to retailers that scan IDs and take other steps to verify a buyer is at least 21. It said it will continue to sell menthol and mint at stores and sell all flavors through its website.

The company also said it would close its Facebook and Instagram social media accounts and pledged other steps to make it clear that it doesn't want kids

using its e-cigarettes.

Its products are meant to help adult smokers quit regular cigarettes, CEO Kevin Burns said in a statement.

"We don't want anyone who doesn't smoke, or already use nicotine, to use Juul products," Burns said. "We certainly don't want youth using the product. It is bad for public health and it is bad for our mission."

E-cigarettes are battery-powered devices that turn liquid often containing nicotine into an inhalable vapor. They're generally considered a less dangerous alternative to regular cigarettes, but health officials have warned nicotine is harmful to developing brains.

Some vaping products come in flavors with names like bubble gum and cotton candy, leading to criticism that the industry is mar-

keting e-cigarettes to children.

Juul e-cigarettes first went on sale in 2015. The devices look like computer flash drives, can be recharged in computer USB ports and have prefilled cartridges containing nicotine. A starter kit with the device, charger and pods costs about \$50 on the company's website.

Last year, Juul became the top-selling U.S. brand of e-cigarette. That's due at least partly to aggressive marketing through Instagram and other social media that many kids see, some researchers say. University of Pittsburgh researchers estimate that a quarter of the followers of Juul's Twitter account are underage.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration bans sales of e-cigarettes and tobacco products to those under 18. Some states restrict sales to those 21 and older.

STEVEN SENNE/AP

WORLD

Mountain gorilla population is on rebound

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — There are more gorillas in the mist — a rare conservation success story, scientists say. After facing near-extinction, mountain gorillas are slowly rebounding.

On Wednesday, the Switzerland-based International Union for Conservation of Nature updated mountain gorillas' status from "critically endangered" to "endangered," a more promising, if still precarious, designation. There are now just over 1,000 of the animals in the wild.

"In the context of crashing populations of wildlife around the world, this is a remarkable conservation success," said Tara Stoinski, president and chief scientist of the Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund.

The Atlanta-based nonprofit is

named for the primate researcher whose work helped draw international attention to mountain gorillas and whose memoir became the basis for the 1988 Sigourney Weaver film "Gorillas in the Mist."

"This is a beacon of hope — and it's happened in recently war-torn and still very poor countries," said Stoinski, who is also a member of the IUCN's primate specialist group, which recommended the status change.

Mountain gorillas live in lush and misty forests along a range of dormant volcanoes in east Africa. Their habitat falls inside national parks spanning parts of Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Fossey, who died in 1985, had projected that the primates may be extinct by 2000. Instead, their popu-

lations have been slowly increasing thanks to sustained and well-funded international conservation efforts.

Several factors have enabled mountain gorillas' modest rebound, said Anna Behm Masozera, director of the International Gorilla Conservation Program, based in Kigali, Rwanda.

The three governments have stepped up enforcement of national park boundaries — areas where hunting, logging and paved roads are illegal.

Tourism helps too. Visitors pay up to \$1,500 an hour to watch gorillas, money that helps pay for park rangers.

There's also health care. Gorilla Doctors, a nongovernmental group, has trained veterinary staff in each of the countries where the mountain gorillas live.



DIAN FOSSEY GORILLA FUND/AP

A group of mountain gorillas gather in Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park in 2014. On Wednesday, the species' status was changed from "critically endangered" to "endangered."

Scientists: Key errors in study of ocean warming

The Washington Post

Scientists behind a major study that claimed the Earth's oceans are warming faster than previously thought now say their work contained inadvertent errors that made their conclusions seem more certain than they actually are.

Two weeks after the high-profile study was published in the journal *Nature*, its authors have submitted corrections to the publication.


The Scripps Institution of Oceanography, home to several of the researchers involved, also noted the problems in the scientists' work and corrected a news release on its website, which previously had asserted that the study detailed how the Earth's oceans "have absorbed 60 percent more heat than previously thought."

"Unfortunately, we made mistakes here," said Ralph Keeling, a climate scientist at Scripps who was a co-author of the study. "I think the main lesson is that you work as fast as you can to fix mistakes when you find them."

The central problem, according to Keeling, came in how the researchers dealt with the uncertainty in their measurements. As a result, the findings suffer from too much doubt to definitively support the paper's conclusion about how much heat the oceans have absorbed over time.

The central conclusion of the study — that oceans are retaining ever more energy as more heat is being trapped within Earth's climate system each year — is in line with other studies that have drawn similar conclusions. And it hasn't changed much despite the errors.


But Keeling said the authors' miscalculations mean there is a much larger margin of error in the findings, which means researchers can weigh in with less certainty than they thought.



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WORLD

Defense minister resigns in Israel over cease-fire

Move could lead to early elections

By ARON HELLER
Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israel's defense minister abruptly resigned Wednesday in protest over a cease-fire reached with Gaza militants, in a move that rocked the Israeli political scene and seemed likely to bring about early elections.

Avigdor Lieberman said the cease-fire amounted to "surrender to terrorism" after two days of heavy fighting, and that he could no longer serve a government that endorsed it. Lieberman had demanded a far stronger Israeli response to the most intense round of rocket fire against Israel since a 50-day war in 2014, but appeared to have been overruled by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

His resignation delivers a major blow to Netanyahu's coalition government and sparked immediate calls for early elections. Lieberman said he hoped that in the coming days a date would be set for a new vote. The opposition parties joined his call.

The government still has a narrow one-seat majority in the Knesset under Lieberman's nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu faction, but is unlikely to survive until the next elections, currently set for November 2019.

The party of another Netanyahu rival, Naftali Bennett, has already announced that if he is not appointed defense minister it will also quit the coalition — a move that would trigger early elections.

Given Bennett's sometimes rocky relationship with Netanyahu, it is far from certain he will gain the powerful defense post. Yair Lapid, head of the opposition Yesh Atid Party, said "the countdown has begun" to the end of Netanyahu's term in office.

Lieberman's resignation will take effect in 48 hours and Netanyahu will take over the defense portfolio on an interim basis. Netanyahu currently also serves as Israel's foreign minister.

Netanyahu had come under heavy criticism for agreeing to the cease-fire, especially from his own political base and in rocket-battered towns in southern Israel that are typically strongholds of his ruling Likud Party.

Angry residents took to the street Tuesday chanting "Disgrace!" at what they saw as the government's capitulation to violence and its inability to protect long-term security. Many have openly vowed to never vote Likud

'We are buying quiet in the short term at the cost of severe damage to our security in the long term.'

Avigdor Lieberman
Israeli defense minister

again.

"We are third-class citizens here in Sderot and the communities on the border with Gaza," complained David Maimon, a local resident. "It's a shame. Instead of helping us and letting us live quietly, they let us suffer."

Recent months have seen sporadic rocket attacks as well as militant infiltration attempts and waves of incendiary kites that have destroyed Israeli crops.

Netanyahu presented the decision to step back from a full-blown conflict as a unified one made by his Security Cabinet and based on the military's recommendations. But Lieberman and Bennett later expressed reservations, saying they favored a stronger response.

Netanyahu defended his actions at a memorial ceremony in the Negev desert for Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion.

"I see the big picture of Israeli security that I cannot share with the public," he said. "Our enemies celebrate for a cease-fire and they know well why. I cannot detail our plans for the future. We will dictate the time and circumstances that are right for Israel and are right for the security of our people."

"In times like these, leadership is not doing the easy thing. Leadership is doing the right thing, even if it is hard. Leadership is sometime facing criticism," he added.

Lieberman said the cease-fire deal, coupled with a decision to allow Qatar to deliver \$15 million in aid to Gaza last week, were too much for him to bear.

"We are buying quiet in the short term at the cost of severe damage to our security in the long term," he said in his resignation announcement. "The weakness we displayed also projects itself to other arenas."

A gleeful Hamas said Lieberman's resignation marked a "political victory for Gaza."



MARIT HØMMEDAL, NTB SCANPIX/AP

The Norwegian frigate KNM Helge Ingstad, shown taking on water on Nov. 8 after a collision with the tanker Sola TS in Oygarden, Norway, is reported to be nearly underwater.

Norwegian frigate rammed by a Maltese tanker sinks further

Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — One of Norway's Navy frigates has almost completely gone under water after an oil tanker rammed into it last week and tore a large hole in its side, authorities said Tuesday.

Rear Adm. Nils Andreas Stensøenes, the head of Norway's navy, said several of the wires used to stabilize the KNM Helge Ingstad snapped Tuesday, causing the vessel to sink further into the fjord.

Only the top of the frigate with its radar and antennas remained above the waterline.

The 442-foot frigate began listing heavily after a Maltese-flagged oil tanker collided with it Nov. 8 in a harbor in Sture, north of Bergen. Its 137-member

crew was evacuated and eight people onboard were injured.

The tanker was only slightly damaged in the collision.

Stensøenes said plans remained to recover the vessel but didn't give details. Authorities are investigating the cause of the accident.

"It is too early to say what kind of damages there are," Cmdr. Haavard Mathisen said.

Built in Spain in 2009, the frigate was part of a NATO fleet in the Atlantic and had recently taken part in the vast Trident Juncture NATO military drill in Norway.

The area surrounding the almost sunken frigate has been declared a military area.

UK's May lobbies for draft Brexit deal

By JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

LONDON — British Prime Minister Theresa May said Wednesday that a draft divorce deal with the European Union delivers the Brexit that Britons voted for as she tried to persuade her divided Cabinet that it must back the agreement or plunge the U.K. into political and economic uncertainty.

May called a special Cabinet meeting after negotiations from Britain and the European Union broke a monthslong logjam and reached agreement on divorce terms, including a plan to keep the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland open after Brexit.

Ahead of the 2 p.m. meeting, May told lawmakers in the House of Commons that the draft deal "takes us significantly closer to delivering what the British people voted for in the referendum" of

2016 that opted to leave the EU.

May said Britain would "take back control of our borders, our laws and our money ... while protecting jobs, security and the integrity of our United Kingdom."

But Pro-Brexit lawmakers in May's Conservative Party a group that includes some members of the Cabinet — say the agreement will leave Britain tethered to the EU after it departs and unable to forge an independent trade policy.

Euroskeptic Conservative legislator Peter Bone warned May that "if the media reports about the EU agreement are in any way accurate, you will not be delivering the Brexit people voted for and today you will lose the support of many Conservative (members of Parliament) and millions of voters across the country."

May's supporters argue that the deal is the best on offer, and the alternatives are a chaotic "no deal" Brexit that would cause

huge disruption to people and businesses, or an election that could see the Conservative government replaced by the left-of-center Labour Party.

Former Foreign Secretary William Hague warned "ardent Brexiters" that if they shoot down May's deal, it could lead to a change of government and a new referendum and "Brexit might never happen at all."

Failure to secure Cabinet backing will leave May's leadership in doubt and the Brexit process in chaos, with exit day just over four months away on March 29.

If the Cabinet supports the deal, it still must be approved by leaders of the 28-nation EU. Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar said EU leaders had penciled in a Nov. 25 Brexit summit to discuss the deal though he cautioned nothing was guaranteed and much could still go wrong.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Private college students kidnapped, assaulted

MO POINT LOOKOUT — A convicted felon has been charged with abducting two Christian college students and forcing them to perform sex acts on each other at gunpoint after they violated curfew and were locked out of their south-west Missouri campus.

The Springfield News-Leader reported that Robert Hyslop, 49, is jailed without bond on charges of kidnapping, sexual abuse and sodomy.

Charging documents say the College of the Ozarks students fell asleep in a commuter parking lot after the campus' front gate was locked when they returned after curfew. The documents say Hyslop made the man and woman drive to a highway lookout, where he forced them to perform sex acts. Hyslop also is accused of making the woman touch him sexually.

Baby girl born on Nov. 11 at 11:11 p.m.

MN ST. PAUL — A Minnesota baby girl was born on Veterans Day — the 11th day of the 11th month — at 11:11 p.m.

Erin and Mike Potts, of Hugo, welcomed their first child on Sunday, the 100th anniversary of the armistice that ended World War I. The girl was born at The Mother Baby Center in St. Paul.

WCCO-TV reported that the new mom said it was a long labor, from about 5 a.m. until 11 p.m., "but the delivery went smoothly."

Chair used to guide deer out of school

IA JANESVILLE — A parent used a chair to guide a deer out of a northeast Iowa school after it jumped in through a window.

The deer broke through a window in the superintendent's office Monday afternoon at the Janesville Consolidated School District school building in Janesville.

Superintendent BJ Meaney said the parent was picking up his child when the deer broke in. Meaney credited the parent, Josh Smith, with quick thinking in grabbing the chair to guide the deer out of the building.

Meaney said classes went on as scheduled.

Pair of dogs left at freezing park rescued

NC HILLSBOROUGH — Police in North Carolina rescued two dogs abandoned at a freezing dog park in Hillsborough.

Hillsborough police Lt. Andy Seaton told The News & Observer officers were looking up a park Sunday night when they heard barking. The officers found the two dogs locked behind the park's dog park fence, and neither had a microchip or collar.

He said both seemed healthy despite the temperature.

Police said Monday that the dogs' owner had been found.

THE CENSUS

170 The approximate number of neglected dogs seized from an overcrowded Iowa puppy mill. A news release on the Worth County Sheriff's Office website said the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals took the animals away for medical and other care after deputies served a warrant Monday. It described the dogs — all Samoyeds — as "fearful and undersocialized." Officials said the dogs were kept in kennels that provided minimal protection from the elements and that they had no access to clean water.



DOUGLAS GRAHAM/AP

Welsh pony ride

Fora Hillman, of Bloomfield, Va., drives her Welsh pony along Willsville Road in western Loudoun County in Virginia on Monday.

Dog aiding robbery victim is wounded

DC WASHINGTON — Police in the nation's capital said a dog was shot while trying to save its owner from a robbery. The Washington Post reported that District of Columbia police said the dog was severely wounded and taken to veterinary hospital.

Police said the owner was getting out of his car Friday night when a man approached and robbed him at gunpoint.

Police said the dog was in the car and leapt from the vehicle when the robber attempted to flee to a getaway car. The dog was shot by someone in the waiting car.

Runaway elephant returned to sanctuary

NY WESTTOWN — An elephant that was burned by napalm during the Vietnam War has been returned to an up-

state New York animal sanctuary after taking a late night stroll.

State police in Middletown said they went to the Sanctuary for Animals in Westtown on Sunday night when they got a call about a wandering elephant.

Amanda Brook, whose family owns the sanctuary, told the Times Herald-Record that the 46-year-old Asian elephant, named Fritha, wandered off after a worker forgot to turn on an electric fence that keeps her in her designated space at night.

Police remove 47 cats, 6 dogs from home

IN GRIFFITH — Authorities who rescued 47 cats and six dogs from a feces-filled home in northwestern Indiana had to wear face masks while removing the animals.

Griffith police spokesman Commander Keith Martin said the home was declared "unfit for human habitation" due to the

stench of urine and feces.

Police, animal control officers and others wore protective clothing and face masks while rescuing the animals last week in the town 5 miles south of Gary.

Authorities obtained a search warrant following complaints about the residence, which Martin said had been an "illegally run" animal rescue. The house's owner faces charges of abandonment and neglect of vertebrate animals.

Teacher suspended over student in KKK garb

MO POPLAR BLUFF — A southern Missouri school district has suspended a teacher who oversaw a class presentation in which a ninth-grader dressed as a Ku Klux Klan member.

The Springfield News-Leader reported that Poplar Bluff district Superintendent Scott Dill visited the American History class Monday to read the suspended teach-

er's letter of apology.

The student, who dressed as a Klansman on Friday, was among a group assigned to study the 15th Amendment, which awarded voting rights to black men.

Military dog memorial unveiling set next year

WY CODY — A statue commemorating military dogs and their handlers is scheduled to be unveiled around Memorial Day weekend next year at the State of Wyoming Veterans Memorial Park in Cody.

The War and Service Dog Memorial statue was inspired by Powell resident and Iraqi war veteran Matt Bessler and his late dog, Mike, that was killed by a bicyclist in October 2015 after the two were discharged.

The Cody Enterprise reports that the statue was originally set to be unveiled in June 2017 but was delayed for various reasons.

From wire reports

FACES



WARNER BROS. PICTURES/AP

Jude Law, right, plays Albus Dumbledore's younger self in "Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald." The British actor says he spent an afternoon jotting down notes from author J.K. Rowling, who also gave him a vote of confidence.

Jude Law reshapes fan-favorite character with author Rowling's help

By JONATHAN LANDRUM JR.

Associated Press

When Jude Law met with J.K. Rowling about portraying the younger version of Albus Dumbledore, the two discussed how to rebuild the fan-favorite character from the "Harry Potter" films.

Law spent an afternoon jotting down notes from Rowling, who talked to him about Dumbledore's life before becoming the world's most powerful wizard. The British actor walked away with a vote of confidence from the famed author, alleviating some pressure on him.

"When the boss says 'I like you,' it gives you a little bit of comfort," Law said of Rowling, screenwriter of the "Harry Potter" prequel series that is based on her 2001 book "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them." "You can't help but step into something like this, playing a part like this without feeling a sense of responsibility, a fear of letting someone down. But when the creator gives you the thumbs up, it's a blessing."

Dumbledore was a Hogwarts headmaster in the Potter franchise commonly known for his silver hair and long beard, sporting a loose robe. He was played by Michael Gambon after inheriting the role from Richard Harris, who died in 2002.

Law's youthful version enters in his mid-40s wearing a three-piece suit with short auburn hair in the sequel "Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald," which will be released Friday. It's the second part of a five-film franchise that started with 2016's "Fantastic Beasts and

Where to Find Them," which grossed \$813 million worldwide.

In "Grindelwald," Law's character works with his former student Eddie Redmayne's Newt Scamander to thwart the divisive wizard leader Gellert Grindelwald, played by Johnny Depp. The film also stars Katherine Waterston, Zoe Kravitz and Ezra Miller.

For research, Law read several Harry Potter books that referenced Dumbledore, rather than solely watching the previous films featuring the elder character. With the help of Rowling and director David Yates, they wanted to build from the "ground up."

"I was then given the opportunity to create him without feeling the pressure to mimic or impersonate or indeed hang the character too much on past representations by the other actors," Law said. "There were certain traits I wanted to include. I loved his humor, the twinkle he had. He sees the good in almost everyone. He has a good heart. But I was able to layer him up a little more."

Redmayne said the studio perfectly cast Law as Dumbledore, who doesn't necessarily show his true powers and appears in only about six scenes — most of which are interactions with Scamander.

"Being a formidable, formidable actor with great gravitas and weight and yet at the same time, he has this kind of playful quality," Redmayne said of Law. "And I'll never forget our first scene, which was the first time we see each other in the film. I just saw his back, basically. And the way he turned around, it was instant.

It was like in one look, he had managed to inhabit that. I hadn't had any expectations about Dumbledore. But somehow it was solidified in one look."

The sequel picks up after Grindelwald was captured by the Magical Congress of the United States of America with the aid of Newt at the end of the first film. But the villainous wizard finds a way to escape custody and assembles a group of pure-blood wizards who support him to rule over all humans in 1920s Paris.

Law says the film opens the door to many dramatic paths and explores a more troubled time in Dumbledore's life along with his once-close relationship with Grindelwald.

Rowling announced in 2007 that Dumbledore is gay after the release of "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows," the final book in the series. Some on social media criticized the author's decision to unveil and tinker with the beloved character's sexuality, but she has defended her actions.

Law says the story is more focused on his character's complicated relationship with Grindelwald from decades ago, rather than Dumbledore's sexuality.

"His sexuality doesn't define him, but the relationship with Grindelwald does," Law said.

Law called his introduction as Dumbledore a good "warmup" as the franchise progresses. The actor has a few big films ahead on his plate including "Captain Marvel" and "Vox Lux," but is looking forward to filming the third installment of "Fantastic Beasts" next summer.

It'll give Law time to grow his beard.

BTS' agency apologizes for A-bomb shirt

Associated Press

The agency for K-pop superstars BTS apologized Wednesday for members wearing a T-shirt depicting the explosion of an atomic bomb and a hat with a Nazi emblem.

Japanese TV broadcasters recently canceled or stopped discussing possible appearances by the band in that country after images spread on social media of a singer wearing the shirt. The South Korean boy band ran into more troubles after news broke that another member wore a hat featuring a Nazi symbol in a magazine photo book, and band members flew flags with what appeared to be Nazi swastikas during a concert in the past.

"We would like to again offer our sincerest apologies to anyone who has suffered pain, distress and discomfort due to our shortcomings," the band's agency, Big Hit Entertainment, said in a statement.

The T-shirt portrayed an atomic bombing juxtaposed with the celebration of Korea's 1945 liberation from Japan at the end of the World War II. The United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki before Tokyo's surrender.

Before its division into North and South Korea after the liberation, the Korean Peninsula was colonized by Japan in 1910-1945. Many in both Koreas still harbor strong resentment of the Japanese colonial masters. But in South Korea, it's extremely rare for anyone to publicly glorify the atomic bombings, which killed more than 200,000 people in Japan.

It doesn't appear the T-shirt controversy is seriously affecting the band's huge popularity in Japan, with 50,000 people reportedly filling the Tokyo Dome on Wednesday evening to watch them perform.

The BTS agency said in regard to the hat that all apparel and accessories used for the photo book were provided by a media company involved in its publication. It said the flags were intended to symbolize South Korea's restrictively uniform and authoritarian educational systems, not Nazism.

"We will carefully examine and review not only these issues but all activities involving Big Hit and our artists based on a firm understanding of diverse social, historical and cultural considerations to ensure that we never cause any injury, pain or distress to anyone," the agency said.

Other news

■ HBO said Tuesday that the eighth and last season of "Game of Thrones" will return in April 2019 with six episodes to conclude its run. The fantasy series, based on the George R.R. Martin novels has been one of HBO's most successful shows.

■ Joe Perry is feeling the love from fans after he was hospitalized with breathing problems that began after a guest performance with Billy Joel in New York. The Aerosmith guitarist on Tuesday tweeted: "Doing well, thanks for the love and support." A statement from Perry's publicists said that the musician is expected to return to the road this month.

■ Two journalists who helped cover the confirmation process of Brett Kavanaugh are working on a book about the newest Supreme Court justice. Portfolio says Wednesday that it has a deal with New York Times reporters Kate Kelly and Robin Pogrebin for "The Education of Brett Kavanaugh." The publisher says the book will focus on the "many unanswered questions" about Kavanaugh, who faced allegations of sexual harassment and assault stemming from his years in high school and college.

“There were certain traits I wanted to include. I loved his humor, the twinkle he had. He sees the good in almost everyone. He has a good heart. But I was able to layer him up a little more.”

Jude Law

on fleshing out the younger version of Albus Dumbledore

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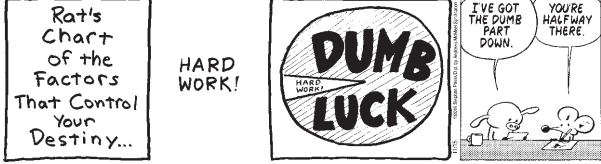
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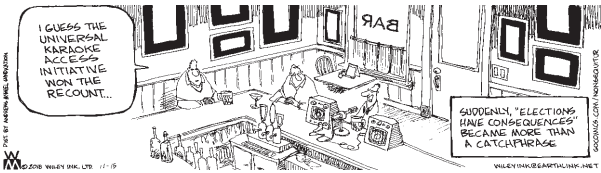
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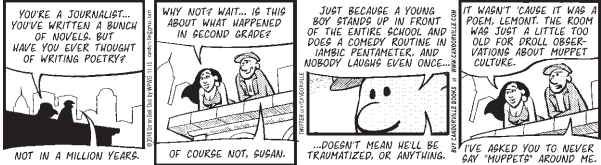
Pearls Before Swine



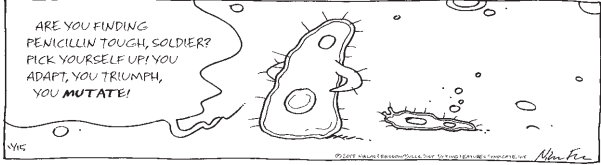
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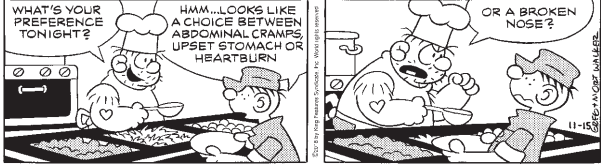
Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15				16					17			
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25				26		27		28		29	30	31
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37			38		39		40		41			
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46	47	48			49		50					
51					52		53				54	55
56					57				58			
59					60				61			

ACROSS

- Middle of a game?
- Shower bar?
- Mexican money
- Actress Lupino
- Chaste
- Author Ferber
- Run for office
- Pace
- Some coll. degrees
- Highway entrances
- Inclement
- "You bet!"
- Brick carrier
- Paulo
- Stanley of "Big Night"
- Saharan
- Spring month
- Statist Mort
- Bike components
- Dandy guy
- de mer
- Cartesian conclusion
- Bets
- Equine homes
- Roofing goo
- Pyramid, maybe
- Victoria's

- Odometer start
- Memorandum
- Regrettably
- Dijon denial

- Carpet type
- Ripped
- Candied veggie
- Klutz
- Land next to Nigeria
- Scorch
- Misfortunes
- Bounce a basketball
- "That hurts!"
- Erie Canal mule
- Cookout spots
- Pilgrimage site
- Cooking fuel
- Dazzle
- Corrida charger
- Latin 101 word
- Goat's cry
- Privy
- Long time

DOWN

- Nervous habit
- Nabokov novel
- Thailand's neighbor
- Twiches
- French assent
- Jason's ship
- Lincoln's coin
- Flying horse
- Wax-coated cheese
- Use scissors
- Feedbag fill
- Standard
- Pensioned
- (Abbr.)

Answer to Previous Puzzle

C	U	E	D	E	A	N	L	A	M	A
A	S	S	U	R	S	A	O	V	E	R
R	E	A	G	R	A	P	E	V	I	N
B	R	U	N	O	A	L	E			
			P	U	T	T	F	L	A	S
P	E	A	R	T	R	E	E	Y	M	C
E	L	M	S	A	L	M	A	M	A	T
T	I	E	S	P	L	U	M	J	O	B
S	A	N	T	A	A	S	E	A		
		A	B	U	N		N	Y	L	O
A	P	P	L	E	S	E	E	D	O	L
O	R	A	L	S	L	O	E	S	A	X
L	E	N	S	R	I	N	D	T	N	T

11-15

CRYPTOQUIP

LTFGY QIG DH QURR-ZOGQO

NGY IDH GOU-GN-L-ZDOB

RABDTYGAH LOB HRRRJ

LOFDTH: XUGYXU RGGOUJ.

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Today's Cryptquip Clue: F equals T

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The Capitals' Tom Wilson, top left, scores a goal on Wild goalie Devan Dubnyk on Tuesday. Wilson returned to the lineup after his 20-game suspension was reduced to 14 by a neutral arbitrator.

Suspension over early, Wilson helps Caps top Wild

"It was a good game by the fellas, and it felt good to put together a good 60 minutes," Wilson said. "Hopefully we can get this thing

third period and added an empty-net tally to lead host New Jersey past struggling Pittsburgh.

Hall also had two assists, and

Filip Forsberg had two goals and an assist for the Predators, who dropped to 8-1-1 on the road this season.

A—16,654 (17,562). **T**—2:35.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL/MLB

Rutgers' Stringer earns 1,000th win

By DOUG FEINBERG
Associated Press

PISCATAWAY, N.J. — As the red and white confetti rained down on the court to celebrate C. Vivian Stringer's 1,000th career victory, the Hall of Fame coach took a moment to soak it all in.

She was surrounded by family, friends, former players and coaches from all three schools where she coached.

"Let me tell you something, sometimes people ask how did I accomplish these things?" Stringer said. "This was only done with my family first of all and they mean everything in the world. They lifted me up."

Stringer became the fifth Division I women's basketball coach to achieve the milestone and sixth woman overall when the Scarlet Knights beat Central Connecticut State 73-44 on Tuesday night.

The Hall of Fame coach joined Pat Summitt, Geno Auriemma, Tara VanDerveer and Sylvia Hatchell in the 1,000-victory club. Division II coach Barbara Stevens also has won over 1,000 games. The 70-year-old Stringer is the first African-American coach to reach the milestone.

As the final seconds ran down, the 4,583 fans held up signs and chanted the coach's name. Her current team dumped a Gatorade bucket full of the confetti over their coach's head.

Video tributes from all the other living Division I members of the 1,000-win club were played as Stringer sat under balloons that spelled out CVS1K. Stringer also received many online tributes on social media, including one from Hillary Clinton. Rutgers presented her with a banner to celebrate her 1,000th win that will hang in the arena's rafters. She also received a customized pair of shoes that listed the number of wins she had each of her three schools — Cheyney State, Iowa and Rutgers.

Many of her former players were on hand to witness the milestone victory. She's 1,000-402 in her career. New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy was also sitting courtside for the historic win.

South Carolina coach Dawn Staley also made the trip to New Jersey with her staff that included Jollette Law, who was an assistant for Stringer at Rutgers for many years and played for her at Iowa.

Top 25 roundup

Vols top Yellow Jackets

Associated Press

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Grant Williams scored 22 points and No. 5 Tennessee used its stingy defense to beat cold-shooting Georgia Tech 66-53 on Tuesday night.

Tennessee (3-0) was playing one day after moving up a spot in the Top 25 to earn its first top-five ranking since the 2007-08 season. After the Yellow Jackets made the game's first basket, Tennessee scored the next seven points and stayed in control the rest of the way.

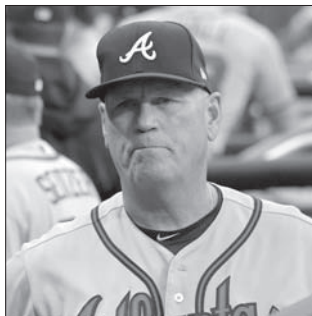
Georgia Tech (1-1) shot just 27.6 percent from the field — its lowest mark since Josh Pastner took over as coach in 2016. The Yellow Jackets had nearly twice as many

fouls (30) as baskets (16). They missed 15 straight shots during one stretch, including their first 11 attempts of the second half.

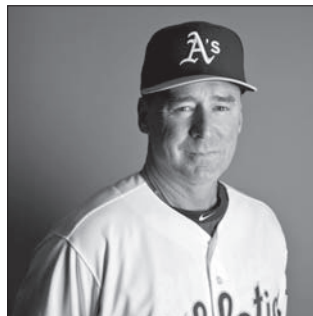
Jordan Bone had 15 points for Tennessee. Brandon Alston led Georgia Tech with 16.

No. 22 LSU 85, Memphis 76: Skylar Myers scored 19 points, transfer Kavell Bigby-Williams added a career-high 14 and host LSU held off a relentless effort by Memphis under first-year coach Penny Hardaway.

Each of LSU's three freshman starters — Naz Reid, Ja'Vonte Smart and Emmitt Williams — scored 11 points. Williams also grabbed 10 rebounds for the Tigers (3-0), who trailed briefly with about 13 minutes to go.



BILL KOSTROU/AP



CHRIS CARLSON/AP

Atlanta's Brian Snitker, left, was voted National League Manager of the Year after leading the Braves to a surprising first-place finish. He received 17 first-place votes, nine seconds and one third for 116 points from the Baseball Writers' Association of America and was the only manager picked on every NL ballot. Athletics manager Bob Melvin won AL Manager of the Year for the third time after leading the Athletics to the playoffs despite the lowest opening-day payroll in the major leagues.

Braves' Snitker, A's Melvin voted MLB's top managers

By RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Bob Melvin's job was a lot different as a rookie manager with Seattle in 2002, and even when he was voted Manager of the Year with Arizona in 2007 and Oakland in 2012.

"Organizations and certainly front offices are more a part of it now, and you have to understand that," Melvin said Tuesday after winning his third manager award.

Melvin won the American League honor after leading the Athletics to the playoffs despite the lowest opening-day payroll in the major leagues.

Atlanta's Brian Snitker won the National League award following a surprising first-place finish, a reward for a 63-year-old baseball lifer who has spent 42 seasons with the Braves. He thought back to how he returned to the minor leagues in 1986, 1991 and 2004 after stints on the staff of the big league Braves.

"Hey, I've been recycled three times from the major leagues as a coach," he said. "Everything that I've been through I think has prepared me better to understand what these guys go through and what this job entails."

A big league catcher from 1985-94, Melvin became a scout, instructor, front office assistant and coach before he got his first big league managing job in 2002 from Mariners general manager Pat Gillick, a future Hall of Famer. Now he works for Oakland executives Billy Beane and Dave Forst, proponents

of the analytics movement that has swept baseball.

"When I started doing this a long time ago with Mr. Gillick in Seattle, their job was to give me the players and then it was my job to put guys in the right spots. And things have changed since then," Melvin said. "It can be a little bit top heavy as far as where the information comes from, from our front office now, and you have to be able to adapt, or at some point in time you might not have one of these jobs. So I'm lucky enough to be with an organization that not only it's my hometown but from a guy that I've known for quite a while in Billy and they do the best they can to consistently try to implement stuff and get us better. And it's my job to accept it and move forward."

Melvin received 18 first-place votes, 19 seconds and one third for 121 points from the Baseball Writers' Association of America. He is the eighth manager to win three or more times and is one shy of the record shared by Bobby Cox and Tony La Russa.

His A's went 97-65, a 22-win improvement over 2017, even with a \$68.6 million payroll when the season began. They overcame a 34-36 start to go to a big league-best from June 16 on. They lost to the New York Yankees in the AL wild-card game.

Boston's Alex Cora was second with seven firsts and 79 points after leading the Red Sox to a team-record 108 wins.

Snitker received 17 firsts, nine seconds and one third for 116 points, the only manager picked on every NL ballot. Milwaukee's Craig Counsell was second with 11 firsts and for 99 points.



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NBA/COLLEGE FOOTBALL

NBA roundup

Durant carries Warriors

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Kevin Durant never found his typical offensive flow and found it a little strange playing without fiery Draymond Green, even if they have yet to make up from all that went down a night earlier in Los Angeles.

Durant isn't sharing any details.

"I'm going to keep that in house, that's what we do here," Durant said. "I'm not trying to give nobody no headlines. What happened, happened. We're trying to move on, we're just trying to play basketball."

Durant scored 29 points with a key jumper in the final minute, a day after a shooting episode on the bench with Green at least in part led to his teammate's suspension Tuesday, and the undermanned Golden State Warriors held off the Atlanta Hawks 110-103.

Klay Thompson added 24 points as Splash Brother Stephen Curry missed his third straight game with a strained left groin. The two-time MVP shuffled and danced as he celebrated big plays from the bench.

Taurean Prince scored 22 points, making four three-pointers and finishing 8-for-14 from the floor in the Hawks' fifth straight loss and ninth in 10.

Durant led the way despite shooting 9-for-23 hours after the Warriors suspended All-Star Green for one game without pay for conduct detrimental to the team. He got into it with Durant on the bench at the end of regulation in a 121-116 overtime road loss to the Clippers and Green wasn't even at the arena Tuesday.

General manager Bob Myers described the off-spring on the All-Star forwards' behavior that was considered going too far. Myers and Steve Kerr collaborated on the decision.

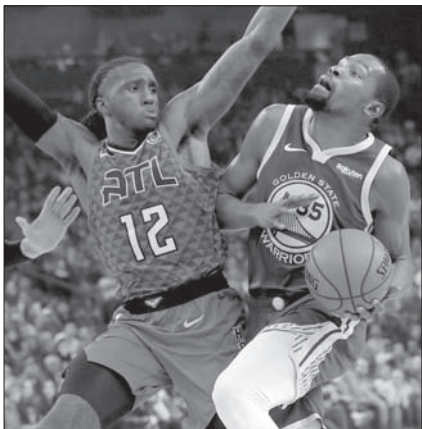
Jonas Jerebko started in place of Green and had season bests of 14 points and 14 rebounds.

Rockets 109, Nuggets 99: James Harden scored 19 of his 22 points in the second half and Houston pulled away to hand host Denver its fourth straight loss.

Harden also had 11 assists, with several going to Clint Capela, who led the Rockets with 24 points, including a series of dunks. Chris Paul added 21 points for Houston, playing for a third straight game without Carmelo Anthony because of what the team said was an illness.

Cavaliers 113, Hornets 89: Jordan Clarkson scored 24 points, Tristan Thompson had 21 rebounds and 11 points, and injury-riddled host Cleveland won for the second time this season.

The Cavaliers (2-1) broke a five-game losing streak.



Warriors forward Kevin Durant, right, drives against Hawks forward Taurean Prince during the second half Tuesday in Oakland, Calif.

Scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	12	2	.857	—
Philadelphia	9	5	.643	3½
Boston	6	8	.429	4½
Brooklyn	7	6	.538	4
New York	4	10	.286	8
Southeast Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Charlotte	7	5	.500	—
Orlando	6	8	.429	1
Miami	5	8	.385	1½
Washington	4	9	.308	2½
Atlanta	3	11	.214	4
Central Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	10	3	.769	—
Indiana	8	5	.615	2½
Detroit	6	6	.500	3½
Chicago	4	10	.286	6½
Cleveland	2	11	.154	8

Western Conference

Southeast Division	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	7	5	.583	—
Memphis	5	5	.500	—
New Orleans	6	6	.500	—
Houston	6	7	.462	1½
Dallas	5	8	.385	2½
Northwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Portland	10	3	.769	—
Denver	9	5	.643	1½
Oklahoma City	8	5	.615	2
Utah	7	6	.538	3
Minnesota	9	3	.750	½
Pacific Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Golden State	8	5	.615	3
L.A. Clippers	8	5	.615	3½
Sacramento	6	6	.500	4
L.A. Lakers	7	6	.538	4
Phoenix	2	11	.154	9

Monday's games	W	L	Pct	GB
Washington 117, Orlando 109				
New Orleans 126, Toronto 110				
Philadelphia 124, Miami 114				
Dallas 102, Chicago 98				
Minnesota 120, Brooklyn 113				
Oklahoma City 118, Phoenix 101				
Utah 96, Memphis 88				
Sacramento 106, San Antonio 99				
L.A. Clippers 121, Golden State 106				
Cleveland 113, Charlotte 89				
Houston 109, Denver 99				
Cleveland at Washington				

Wednesday's games	W	L	Pct	GB
Philadelphia at Washington				
Chicago at Boston				
Charlotte at Orlando				
Miami at Brooklyn				
Memphis at Milwaukee				
New Orleans at Minnesota				
New York at Oklahoma City				
Portland at Phoenix				
Portland at L.A. Lakers				
Golden State at Houston				
Atlanta at Denver				
San Antonio at L.A. Clippers				

Friday's games	W	L	Pct	GB
Brooklyn at Boston				
Miami at Indiana				
Utah at Philadelphia				
New York at New Orleans				
Portland at Minnesota				
Sacramento at Memphis				
Chicago at Milwaukee				

Tuesday

Warriors 110, Hawks 103

ATLANTA — Prince 8-24 3-22, Spellman 1-0 0-0, Len 6-8 2-14, Young 2-12 0-4, Bazemore 7-16 3-13, Bembry 4-7 3-13, Poythress 2-5 0-0 4, Plumlee 2-1 1-2 5, Lin 4-9 0-10, Carter 4-7 0-0 11, Huertier 1-4 0-2, Totals 40-98 11-15 103.

GOLDEN STATE — Durant 9-23 11-23, Jerebko 10-0 0-10, Jones 11-9 0-2, Cook 8-18 0-18, Thompson 8-19 5-24, McKinie 1-3 0-0 3, Looney 1-2 2-3 4, Bell 2-4 2-2 6, Livingston 1-6 0-2, Igouda 3-5 0-8, Totals 59-91 20-21 110.

Rockets 109, Nuggets 99

HOUSTON — Ennis III 6-8 2-2 16, Tucker 4-8 0-12, Capela 11-15 2-24, Paul 7-12 1-5 21, Harden 7-16 6-8 22, Hartenstein 1-1 2-3, Clark 0-2 0-0, Gordon 3-9 3-11, Totals 39-119 26-108.

DENVER — Harneg 5-24 0-6 0-6, Miller 4-4 4-13, Jokic 6-14 2-14, Murray 7-13 1-15, Harris 6-13 0-15, Craig 2-2 0-5, Plumlee 1-4 2-4, Lyles 3-4 1-8, Morris 7-11 2-12 18, Beasley 0-1 0-0 0-0, Totals 38-112 16-99.

Houston — 27 27 32 23-99
Denver — 30 25 21 23-99
 Three-point goals—Houston 13-37 (Tucker 4-7, Paul 7-12, Ennis III 2-4, Gordon 2-7, Harden 2-10, Clark 0-2, Denver 11-25)
 Harris 3-6, Morris 3-6, Hernandez 4-4, Craig 1-1, Lyles 1-1, Miller 1-2, Beasley 0-1, Jokic 0-1, Murray 0-2, Monk 3-3 2-8, Totals 38-112 16-99.

Cavaliers 113, Hornets 89

CHARLOTTE — Batum 5-12 0-0 11, Williams 3-8 0-8, Zeller 3-4 3-3, Walker 12-16, Lamb 8-12 2-2, Bridges 4-8 2-2 5, Kaminsky 1-2 2-5, Bjornson 0-0 0-0 0, Hernandez 1-4 0-2, Monk 3-3 2-8, Graham 0-2 0-0, Parker 4-10 2-19, Bacon 2-4 0-5, Totals 35-92 16-99.

CLEVELAND — Smith 5-13 0-13, Nance 2-3 6-9 7, Thompson 2-11 1-11, Seay 2-8 0-9 16, Hood 7-12 0-16 15-24, Clark 0-2 0-0 0, Harrison 0-3 2-2 2, Okun 1-2 0-0 0, Totals 35-92 16-99.

Cleveland — 38 29 21 25-113
Charlotte — 30 25 21 23-99
 Three-point goals—Charlotte 8-41 (Williams 2-7, Kaminsky 2-1, Bacon 2-8, Bridges 1-3, Batum 1-4, Lamb 1-4, Walker 3-6, Graham 0-2, Parker 3-3, Seay 1-8), Cleveland 13-24 (Smith 3-7, Nance 3-2, Frye 2-2, Nance 1-1, Seay 1-1, Nance Jr. 1-2, Clarkson 1-4, Harrison 0-2, Rebounds—Charlotte 37 (Lamb 6), Cleveland 50 (Thompson 12, Bridges 4, Charlotte 22 (Walker 6), Cleveland 23 (Jokic 9, Smith 5), Total Fouls—Charlotte 11, Cleveland 20, Technicals—Lamb, A—19,52 (20,562).

Top 4 hold steady in CFP rankings

Alabama, Clemson, ND, Michigan still lead

By RALPH D. RUSSO

Associated Press

The College Football Playoff rankings held steady at the top, with Alabama, Clemson, Notre Dame and Michigan an unchanged first four from last week.

The third rankings of the season were drama-free Tuesday night after every top-10 team won last weekend. In fact, the selection committee's entire top 10 stayed the same, the first time that has happened in the five seasons since the CFP was born.

With three weekends left until the final selections are made on Dec. 2, Georgia was fifth and Oklahoma was sixth. LSU, Washington State, West Virginia and Ohio State rounded out the top 10.

UCF moved up one spot to No. 11 and remained the highest-ranked team from outside the Power Five conferences. The Knights on Saturday play Cincinnati, which is ranked for the first time by the selection committee this season at No. 24.

Don't count on stability

In the four-year history of the College Football Playoff, the four teams at the top of the rankings after three weeks have never all made it to the semifinals. As much as it might feel as if the field is well set, it would be best to expect an unexpected result or two over the next three weeks.

Three not-so-outlandish upsets that could create confusion for the selection committee:

1. Alabama loses the SEC championship game to Georgia.

This could lead to the most controversial call in CFP history: The Crimson Tide are the defending national champions and Tua Tagovailoa and Co. have been staying everyone in their path. The Tide are not losing this week to The Citadel. The chances are slim Auburn beats 'Bama at home. But even if that were to happen, Alabama could quickly redeem itself by beating Georgia to win the SEC on championship weekend. A 12-1 SEC champion Alabama is not getting left out of the playoff, nor should it under any available circumstances this season.

But 12-1 without an SEC championship? The committee has already twice seen teams that did not reach their conference title games to the playoff. Last year it was Alabama and the year before, Ohio State got there.

In Ohio State's case, the body-of-work argument was strong enough to overcome being bumped from the Big Ten title chase by Penn State, a team the Buckeyes had lost to in a close

game at Happy Valley. Last year, Alabama seemed like a default pick at 11 over Ohio State and USC. Both were 11-2 with conference titles, but ugly losses on their ledgers.

Could the committee squeeze in the Tide after a loss to Georgia, which would obviously get in, if Clemson, Notre Dame and Michigan (and maybe even Oklahoma) all won out? It's not as if Alabama would have a loaded résumé, with victories against LSU, Mississippi State and Auburn at the top. But there is also little doubt Alabama would be favored on a neutral field against any team in the country.

The committee has to be rooting for the Tide to keep it out of this mess.

2. Ohio State beats Michigan and wins the Big Ten.

Big 12 fans will disagree, but Michigan at 12-1 looks like a good bet to sail into the playoff — especially if Notre Dame finishes unbeaten, therefore making the Wolverines' only loss a one-score game in the opener at South Bend. The Buckeyes have not won road victories against Penn State and Michigan State. Add Michigan and Northwestern in the Big Ten championship game to that résumé, and suddenly a season of struggles in Columbus, Ohio, won't look so bad at all. The stain of that blowout loss at Purdue won't come off easy, though, and choosing between Ohio State at 12-1 and Oklahoma at 12-1 or

West Virginia at 11-1 or Washington State at 12-1 won't be such an easy chore for the committee.

3. Notre Dame loses, especially to Southern California.

Any loss for the Irish looks problematic if the rest of the contenders win out. Michigan could help Notre Dame by finishing 12-1. The Irish could make the case the committee can't put the Wolverines in and leave out the one team that beat them. Don't let anyone tell you the Irish are out with one loss. That's shortsighted and doesn't take into account that Big 12 contenders Oklahoma and West Virginia and Washington State could easily pick up a second loss before they even reach their conference title games.

Still, the Irish at 11-1 pits them against any other once-beaten conference champion, while also possibly forcing the committee to justify putting Michigan in and leaving the Irish out. If Notre Dame's loss is to USC, it could put a spotlight on Washington State's poorly officiated loss to the Trojans back in September by virtue of comparing common opponents.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL



KEITH SRANOCIC/AP

Pittsburgh running back Qadree Ollison became the sixth player in program history to record multiple 1,000 yard rushing seasons with 235 yards on Saturday in a 52-22 win against Virginia Tech.

Panthers turned back clock to turn their season around

By WILL GRAVES
Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Darrin Hall paused for a second and pondered the question. Fresh off a 186-yard performance in front of his infant daughter in a victory that catapulted Pittsburgh to the brink of its first appearance in the ACC championship game, the senior running back tried to put a finger on the last time so much came so easily.

"It had to be Pop Warner when I was about 6 years old," Hall said. "But I'll try to keep it going."

So will the rest of the resurgent Panthers (6-4, 5-1 ACC), who have taken on a decidedly old-school persona while resurrecting their season. Pitt is averaging 410 yards rushing during its three-game winning streak, including a staggering 492 in a 52-22 dismantling of Virginia Tech on Saturday that moved the Panthers within one victory of capturing the typically chaotic ACC Coastal Division.

In an era when offenses have become increasingly diverse, the Panthers are going in another direction. Pitt is playing with a determined physicality on offense that eschews intricacy for something more basic. The Panthers snapped the ball 47 times against the Hokies. On 36 of those snaps, quarterback Kenny Pickett either handed the ball off — primarily to Hall or Qadree Ollison — or took off himself.

The way Pickett figures it, why not?

"Those are two of the best backs in the country, no doubt, and you

“Those are two of the best backs in the country, no doubt.”

Kenny Pickett

Pitt quarterback, on teammates Darrin Hall and Qadree Ollison

add that with the line that we have, they're a dangerous group," Pickett said. "You feel real good having them two next to you or behind you in the backfield."

Ollison became the sixth player in program history to record multiple 1,000-yard rushing seasons after piling up 235 yards and three scores against Virginia Tech, 97 of them coming on a sprint down the right sideline for a fourth-quarter touchdown that marked the longest play from scrimmage ever for a school that's been playing football for 114 years.

And yet all Ollison did afterward was marvel at the play of the offensive line — he had the starting five join him in the postgame news conference on Saturday — and Hall, his longtime backfield mate. The two have forged a unique friendship during their overlapping careers. Ollison has become the workhorse, meaning Hall's touches are somewhat limited.

It's what Hall is doing with those touches, however, that has drawn Ollison's admiration. Hall carried the ball just seven times against Virginia Tech and nearly topped 200 yards, forcing Ollison to do the math.

"That's 27 yards a carry," Ollison said. "I was telling him, 'Save

some long runs for me.'"

At the moment, there are plenty to go around for the Panthers. Pitt averaged 13.6 yards per carry on Saturday. The Panthers are 10th in the country in yards rushing per game and do it while working out of a conventional set. No triple option. Little read option. Just line up, snap the ball and go.

"Our offense will be about as foreign to most teams in this conference ... because they don't get to see it every week," coach Pat Narduzzi said.

Maybe, but 10 games in, very few secrets remain. Pitt has struggled throwing the ball all season, forcing the Panthers to rely heavily on the run to move the ball. Virginia Tech — much like every other team Pitt has played over the last five weeks while the Panthers righted their season — knew what was coming. And still, the Hokies couldn't stop it.

"It goes down to the toughness part of the game, so if you're going to be a tough football team, you'd better stop the run and run the football," Narduzzi said. "And that's why we live in Pittsburgh, that's why we're here. That's what the Steelers are; that's what we are."

Bulldogs keeping focus on UMass

By CHARLES ODUM
Associated Press

ATHENS, Ga. — There's never been a better time for Kirby Smart to tell his Georgia players the focus is on them, not the opponent.

It's a much-repeated mantra for the Georgia coach that should hit home with players as they begin preparation for Saturday's visit from UMass.

After completing a stretch of seven straight Southeastern Conference games, including last week's 27-10 win over Auburn, No. 5 Georgia (9-1, No. 5 CFP) will close its regular season with nonconference games against UMass and Georgia Tech.

Players might be tempted to look ahead to the Dec. 1 SEC championship game against No. 1 Alabama even before the state rivalry game against Georgia Tech.

It could be even more difficult to remain locked in on the Bulldogs' first game against the Minutemen. The opening betting line listed Georgia favored by 45 points for its first meeting with UMass.

Smart recognizes focus could be a challenge this week.

"I think that's leadership," Smart said Monday. "I think Monday I'll find out a lot about our team this week because it's never about who we're playing. ... I've told you all every week that it's not about Florida, it's not about Kentucky. It's not really about them. It's just about how we work, because we worry about us. And that way when you get to this week, it's not different. And we focus on us."

UMass (4-7) is coming off a 35-16 home loss to Brigham Young. The Minutemen lost at Boston College 55-21 on Sept. 1 in their

only game this season against a Power Five team.

It is clear Smart's players have practiced their answers about not looking ahead.

"The next one is the biggest one," said wide receiver Tyler Simmons.

Bigger than Alabama?

"I wouldn't say it's the biggest one, but it's the biggest one right now," Simmons said with a smile.

"We take every game like any other one. Like Auburn, like Alabama, we're going to take UMass the same way."

Georgia has won three straight games, including against No. 15 Florida and No. 20 Kentucky, since its only loss at No. 10 LSU on Oct. 13.

The Bulldogs' biggest motivator the next two weeks is to protect their national championship hopes. Quarterback Jake Fromm doesn't want to see the Bulldogs stumble against UMass.

"The team has definitely taken strides right now," Fromm said. "You can tell with the caliber of opponents we've been playing and how well we've been able to run the ball and play as a team."

The defense has been playing real well now stopping the run and getting off on third down. Let's just keep going, keep chopping away at it and hopefully it can pay off for us."

This could be a week where Smart gives more playing time to backup players, though he said, "I think that's a large assumption."

Apparently that assumption has made its way through the roster.

"I've heard the buzz a little bit about young guys being excited to play," Simmons said. "I know they look forward to it a lot. ... It's just good to have a chance to see them play."



JOSHUA L. JONES, ATHENS BANNER-HERALD/AP

Georgia coach Kirby Smart, left, reaction the sideline last week against Auburn. Smart is trying to keep the No. 5 Bulldogs focused on Saturday's opponent, UMass (4-7), instead of looking ahead.

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NFL

Bell can't play this season

By WILL GRAVES
Associated Press

PITTSBURGH — Le'Veon Bell's patience on the football field sets him apart. In a game built on chaos, the star running back rarely hurries or makes hasty decisions.

His ability to put his hand on the back of an offensive lineman while waiting for the hole to open — much like a child sticking close to a parent in a crowded store — helps him make the remarkably difficult at times look remarkably easy.

His career at a crossroads partly of his own making, Bell will have to rely on that patience now more than ever after the two-time All-Pro declined to sign his one-year, \$14.4 million franchise tender with the Pittsburgh Steelers by Tuesday's deadline, making him ineligible to play for the AFC North leaders or anyone else this season.

The unprecedented move sets Bell up for the potentially big-time payday he has long been searching when he becomes a free agent in the spring, provided there's a team willing to splurge on one of the league's more talented if mercurial players.

While TV cameras set up outside the team's practice facility on Tuesday to catch Bell if he decides to show up for work for the first time in nearly 10 months, the



Don Wacziarg/AP

Steelers running back Le'Veon Bell refused to sign his one-year franchise tender Tuesday and is not eligible to play this season.

26-year-old never pulled up to the gates, ending — for now — one of the more unusual labor standoffs between a team and a player in the era of free agency.

Pittsburgh coach Mike Tomlin seemed resigned to Bell's decision shortly before the 4 p.m. deadline, saying simply "so be it" when asked about the possi-

bility of Bell not returning to the team that selected him in the second round of the 2013 draft and helped mold him into one of the league's most dynamic threats.

"Even when we don't understand it, we're sensitive to it, so we're not shocked when things happen from a business standpoint, no," Tomlin said.

Game in Mexico relocated to LA

NFL cites field condition as reason

By GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The NFL moved the Rams' Monday night showdown with the Kansas City Chiefs from Mexico City to Los Angeles on Tuesday due to the poor condition of the field at Azteca Stadium.

The league announced the extraordinary decision six days before one of the most-anticipated regular-season games of the year.

In a news release, the league said it determined that the recently re-sodded field at Mexico City's historic stadium "does not meet NFL standards for playability and consistency, and will not meet those standards by next Monday."

The Rams (9-1) will host the Chiefs (9-1) at the Coliseum instead. The much-anticipated game is just the fifth meeting since 1970 between teams with one or fewer losses in Week 11 or later.

The decision creates a morass of logistical concerns for the teams and fans traveling to Mexico, and it disappoints thousands of Mexican fans eager to see a marquee matchup in North

America's most populous city. But the league consulted with the players' association and local officials before deciding it couldn't risk the players' health on a damaged field.

"The combination of a difficult rainy season and a heavy multi-event calendar of events at the stadium have resulted in significant damage to the field that presents unnecessary risks to player safety and makes it unsuitable to host an NFL game," said Mark Waller, the NFL's executive vice president of international. "As a result, we have determined that moving the game is the right decision, and one that we needed to announce now in order to allow our teams and fans to make alternate arrangements."

Azteca officials changed the playing surface from natural grass to a hybrid in May, but the turf hasn't been ideal for several months. Concern about the field grew in recent days when aerial photos of the stadium showed serious damage to the grass.

Cruz Azul, the Liga MX soccer club that shares the stadium with Club America, played a tournament game on the field last Saturday in noticeably poor conditions.

Points: New Orleans on pace to finish third all-time in points per game

FROM BACK PAGE

The 2018 Saints, who host defending Super Bowl champion Philadelphia on Sunday, currently lead the NFL with an average 36.7 points through nine games. Maintaining that pace for the rest of the regular season would put them third all-time in scoring behind the 2013 Denver Broncos (37.9 points per game) and the 2007 New England Patriots (36.8). And the way the Saints are playing, their current scoring average could very well increase before the season is out. They've scored at least 40 points in five of nine games so far.

They've also added yet another potential receiving target, signing veteran Brandon Marshall on Monday.

"He's got good length and size. He's another big target," Payton said of the 34-year-old Marshall, who became a free agent when he was released by Seattle on Oct. 30. "I thought size was important but (also) experience and someone that we felt had strong hands."

Eleven different Saints have gotten in the end zone this season, including Brees, who dove over the pile at the line of scrimmage for his third rushing TD this season during Sunday's 51-14 triumph at Cincinnati. The 39-year-old QB also is having one of his most efficient seasons, completing 77.3 percent of his passes for 21 TDs and only one interception.

Brees' completion rate arguably has been aided by his decision to often throw shorter passes, particularly to Kamara, who has 55 receptions for 473 yards and three TDs. But Brees asserts that the Saints' offensive



GARY LANDERS/AP

New Orleans Saints running back Alvin Kamara dives in for a touchdown during the first half of Sunday's game against the Bengals in Cincinnati.

production has stemmed in no small part from their ability to methodically sustain drives with high-percentage plays.

"It pays dividends as the game goes on," Brees said. "You wear a defense down. ... We say, 'Don't get bored with the (short) completions, the 4-yard runs. They result in big plays if we keep it up.'"

A case in point is Brees' 72-yard game-

breaking touchdown pass to receiver Michael Thomas in the final minutes of a Week 9 victory over the Los Angeles Rams, whose defenders crashed down to swarm Kamara on the play.

During the Payton-Brees era, the Saints have more often than not been a pass-heavy team. But not this season. New Orleans ranks eighth in yards rushing and

seventh in yards passing.

"We're hoping to have balance," Payton said. "Our offensive line has played well. We've been consistent rushing the football. I feel like Drew's playing a high level. ... Having that ability to rush or pass is something that can help."

And while Brees is in the twilight of his career, New Orleans is enjoying major production from two of its younger skill players.

The 23-year-old Kamara has 1,109 yards and 14 TDs from scrimmage on a mix of runs and receptions. Thomas, 25, has caught 78 passes for 950 yards and seven TDs.

Saints right tackle Ryan Ramczyk is in only his second NFL season, but said even he can see the Saints' offense is "definitely special."

"The cohesiveness up front really helps us out. And then guys like Mark and Alvin and Drew, Michael — all those guys around us — are special athletes," Ramczyk said. "When we come together, we can make a lot of great things happen."

And that takes a lot of pressure off the Saints' defense, which yielded 48 points in a season-opening loss, but since has been good enough to help New Orleans win eight straight. Next up are the Philadelphia Eagles (4-5).

"We don't have to be super heroes," Anzalone said. "Things aren't going to always go our way, but we just have to give our offense a chance, and we've been able to do that these past eight games."

SPORTS



Repeat of last week

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BRYAN WOOLSTON/AP

Saints quarterback Drew Brees has completed 77.3 percent of his passes for 21 touchdowns and one interception.

NFL

PILING UP
POINTSNew Orleans scoring
at team-record paceBY BRETT MARTEL
Associated Press

The dynamic Saints running back duo of Mark Ingram and Alvin Kamara agree that the word "savage" best describes New Orleans' offense.

Certainly, the Saints are scoring so often, and in so many ways, it's enough to bruise defenders' egos.

"I'm glad we don't have to play them," Saints linebacker Alex Anzalone said Monday, a day after New Orleans broke the 50-point mark in a victory over Cincinnati.

Even by the lofty standards of offensive-minded coach Sean Payton and record-setting quarterback Drew Brees have set since joining forces in 2006, New Orleans is putting points on the board with exceptional proficiency.

The Saints have never averaged better than 34.2 points per game for an entire season. That mark was set by New Orleans' 2011 squad that featured Brees and four skill players that each gained more than 950 yards from scrimmage: tight end Jimmy Graham, receiver Marques Colston, and running backs Darren Sproles and Pierre Thomas.

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'It pays dividends as the game goes on. You wear a defense down.'

Drew Brees
Saints
quarterback

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